

Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



Monday, May 9, 2005
Volume 41—Number 18
Pages 713–765

Contents

Addresses and Remarks

- Cinco de Mayo dinner—739
- Latino Small Business Economic Conference, discussion on strengthening Social Security—731
- Mississippi, discussion on strengthening Social Security in Canton—718
- National Day of Prayer—744
- Preserve America Presidential Awards—717
- Radio address—715
- White House Correspondents Association dinner—716

Communications to Congress

- Budget amendments, letter transmitting—758
- District of Columbia emergency planning and security costs, letter providing notification of reimbursement—715
- Syria, letter on national emergency blocking property of certain persons and prohibiting the export of certain goods—757

Communications to Federal Agencies

- Designation of Officers of the Office of Personnel Management To Act as Director of the Office of Personnel Management, memorandum—757
- Determination Pursuant to Section 2(c)(1) of the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962, as Amended, memorandum—714
- Redesignation of the United States Naval Reserve to the United States Navy Reserve, memorandum—715
- Vesting of Blocked Funds of the Government of Cuba, memorandum—715

Interviews With the News Media

- Interviews
 - Dutch TV NOS—745
 - Estonian Television—742
 - Foreign print journalists—747
 - Latvian Television—758
 - Lithuanian National Television—740
 - NTV of Russia—760
 - Rustavi 2 Television of Georgia—761

Notices

- Continuation of the National Emergency Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting the Export of Certain Goods to Syria—756

Proclamations

- Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month—729
- Jewish Heritage Week—756
- Law Day—713
- Loyalty Day—713
- Mother's Day—755
- National Day of Prayer—730
- National Observance of the 60th Anniversary of the End of World War II—728
- Older Americans Month—730

Supplementary Materials

- Acts approved by the President—765
- Checklist of White House press releases—764
- Digest of other White House announcements—763
- Nominations submitted to the Senate—764

Editor's Note: The President was in Riga, Latvia, on May 6, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Published every Monday by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408, the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* contains statements, messages, and other Presidential materials released by the White House during the preceding week.

The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* is published pursuant to the authority contained in the Federal Register Act (49 Stat. 500, as amended; 44 U.S.C. Ch. 15), under regulations prescribed by the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, approved by the President (37 FR 23607; 1 CFR Part 10).

Distribution is made only by the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* will be furnished by mail to domestic subscribers for \$80.00 per year (\$137.00 for mailing first class) and to foreign subscribers for \$93.75 per year, payable to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The charge for a single copy is \$3.00 (\$3.75 for foreign mailing).

The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* is also available on the Internet on the GPO Access service at <http://www.gpo.gov/nara/nara003.html>.

There are no restrictions on the republication of material appearing in the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*.

US GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS
Washington DC 20402

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
Penalty for private use, \$300

PRESORTED STANDARD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
GPO
PERMIT NO. G-26

Week Ending Friday, May 6, 2005

**Proclamation 7891—Law Day,
U.S.A., 2005**

April 29, 2005

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

The American legal system helps preserve our constitutional principles and ensures justice for all our citizens. As we celebrate Law Day, we recognize our Nation's commitment to the rule of law and the rights and privileges that all Americans share.

President Eisenhower established Law Day in 1958 to pay tribute to our heritage of liberty, justice, and equality under the law. Each year on Law Day, we recognize our Nation's commitment to a fair legal system and to protecting the rights and freedoms we cherish.

The theme of this year's Law Day, "The American Jury: We the People in Action," recognizes the imperative of self-government and the necessity of individuals' participation in the judicial process. By taking time away from their day-to-day responsibilities to serve on juries, Americans demonstrate their commitment to good citizenship and their willingness to uphold the laws of our Nation.

Since our founding, the jury has been a fundamental institution in American law and a pillar of our democracy. As we celebrate Law Day this year, we honor the continued role of the jury as a foundation of our legal system, and express our appreciation to all Americans who serve on juries.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, in accordance with Public Law 87–20, as amended, do hereby proclaim May 1, 2005, as Law Day, U.S.A. I also encourage Americans to observe May 1 through May 7, 2005, as National Juror Appreciation Week. I call upon the people of the United States to acknowledge the importance of our Nation's

legal and judicial systems with appropriate ceremonies and activities, and to display the flag of the United States in support of this national observance.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:48 a.m., May 3, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 4. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**Proclamation 7892—Loyalty Day,
2005**

April 29, 2005

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

Generations of men and women have sacrificed to defend the basic principles of liberty upon which our Nation was founded. This spirit of selfless service helps keep America strong and free. On Loyalty Day, we join together to celebrate this bond that makes our country great.

For more than two centuries, our military has given us examples of courage and patriotism that make every American proud. Today, more than a million Americans are stationed around the world, taking great risks and making personal sacrifices to secure the blessings of liberty for our country and to spread peace and freedom. These brave men and women are unrelenting in battle and unwavering in loyalty. Their service exemplifies our Nation's ideals, and they have our gratitude and support.

Volunteer service is also a proud American value. Our Nation relies on compassionate souls who look after their neighbors and surround the lost with love. Through good works, we can extend the promise of our country into every home and neighborhood. This year, I announced a new initiative, Helping America's Youth, led by First Lady Laura Bush, to help young people overcome the challenges they may face and emphasize the importance of loving, caring adults in every child's life. By educating and preparing today's young people to be the leaders of tomorrow, we strengthen our country and pass on the liberties we cherish to rising generations.

The Congress, by Public Law 85-529, as amended, has designated May 1 of each year as "Loyalty Day." On Loyalty Day, we honor our great Nation and the people who help keep it safe and strong. I ask all Americans to join me in this day of celebration and in reaffirming our allegiance to our Nation.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 1, 2005, as Loyalty Day. I call upon all the people of the United States to join in support of this national observance, and to display the flag of the United States on Loyalty Day.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:48 a.m., May 3, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 4. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Memorandum on Determination Pursuant to Section 2(c)(1) of the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962, as Amended

April 29, 2005

Presidential Determination No. 2005-23

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Determination Pursuant to Section 2(c)(1) of the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962, as Amended

Pursuant to section 2(c)(1) of the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962, as amended, 22 U.S.C. 2601(c)(1), I hereby determine that it is important to the national interest that up to \$34.7 million be made available from the U.S. Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund to support unexpected urgent humanitarian needs in the West Bank and Gaza, and refugee repatriation to Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These funds may be used, as appropriate, to provide contributions to international, governmental, and non-governmental organizations, and, as necessary, for administrative expenses of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.

You are authorized and directed to inform the appropriate committees of the Congress of this determination and the obligation of funds under this authority, and to arrange for the publication of this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Memorandum on Redesignation of the United States Naval Reserve to the United States Navy Reserve

April 29, 2005

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense

Subject: Redesignation of the United States Naval Reserve to the United States Navy Reserve

Pursuant to the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 (Public Law 108–375), I approve the redesignation of the United States Naval Reserve to the United States Navy Reserve.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Memorandum on Vesting of Blocked Funds of the Government of Cuba

April 29, 2005

Memorandum for the Secretary of the Treasury

Subject: Vesting of Blocked Funds of the Government of Cuba

Pursuant to section 2002 of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, Public Law 106–386, as amended by section 201 of the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act of 2002, Public Law 107–297, I hereby determine that the blocked funds of the Government of Cuba held at JP Morgan Chase in the account titled “Taxes Owed by CATT to the Government of Cuba,” shall be vested and distributed to Ana Margarita Martinez. The funds amount to approximately \$198,000.

I therefore direct you to vest these funds and distribute them to Ana Margarita Martinez.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Providing Notification of Reimbursement to the District of Columbia for Emergency Planning and Security Costs

April 29, 2005

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with title I of the District of Columbia Appropriations Act, 2005, Public Law 108–335, I am notifying the Congress of the proposed use of \$2,471,588 provided in title I under the heading “Federal Payment for Emergency Planning and Security Costs in the District of Columbia.” This will reimburse the District for the costs of public safety expenses related to security events and responses to terrorist threats.

The details of this action are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President’s Radio Address

April 30, 2005

Good morning. This past week, I addressed the Nation to talk about the challenges facing Social Security. The Social Security system that Franklin Roosevelt created was a great moral success of the 20th century. It provided a safety net that ensured dignity and peace of mind to millions of Americans in retirement.

Yet today, there is a hole in the safety net for younger workers, because Congress has made promises it cannot keep. We have a duty to save and strengthen Social Security for our children and grandchildren.

In the coming week, I will travel to Mississippi to continue to discuss ways to put Social Security on the path to permanent solvency. I will continue to assure Americans that some parts of Social Security will not

change. Seniors and people with disabilities will continue to get their checks, and all Americans born before 1950 will also receive their full benefits. And I will make it clear that as we fix Social Security, we have a duty to direct extra help to those most in need and make Social Security a better deal for younger workers.

We have entered a new phase in this discussion. As Members of Congress begin work on Social Security legislation, they should pursue three important goals. First, I understand that millions of Americans depend on Social Security checks as a primary source of retirement income, so we must keep this promise to future retirees as well. As a matter of fairness, future generations should receive benefits equal to or greater than the benefits today's seniors get.

Second, I believe a reformed system should protect those who depend on Social Security the most. So in the future, benefits for low-income workers should grow faster than benefits for people who are better off. By providing more generous benefits for low-income retirees, we'll make good on this commitment: If you work hard and pay into Social Security your entire life, you will not retire into poverty.

This reform would solve most of the funding challenges facing Social Security. A variety of options are available to solve the rest of the problem. And I will work with Congress on any good-faith proposal that does not raise the payroll-tax rate or harm our economy.

Third, any reform of Social Security must replace the empty promises being made to younger workers with real assets, real money. I believe the best way to achieve this goal is to give younger workers the option of putting a portion of their payroll taxes into a voluntary personal retirement account. Because this money is saved and invested, younger workers would have the opportunity to receive a higher rate of return on their money than the current Social Security system can provide.

Some Americans have reservations about investing in the markets because they want a guaranteed return on their money, so one investment option should consist entirely of Treasury bonds, which are backed by the full

faith and credit of the United States Government. Options like this will make voluntary personal retirement accounts a safer investment that will allow you to build a nest egg that you can pass on to your loved ones.

In the days and weeks ahead, I will work to build on the progress we have made in the Social Security discussion. Americans of all ages are beginning to look at Social Security in a new way. Instead of asking whether the system has a problem, they're asking when their leaders are going to fix it. Fixing Social Security must be a bipartisan effort, and I'm willing to listen to a good idea from either party. I'm confident that by working together, we will find a solution that will renew the promise of Social Security for the 21st century.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:35 a.m. on April 29 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 30. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 29 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the White House Correspondents Association Dinner April 30, 2005

Thank you all. Thank you, and good evening. I always look forward to these dinners where I'm supposed to be funny—[laughter]—intentionally. [Laughter] I'm really looking forward to hearing Cedric the Entertainer. I kind of think of myself that way. [Laughter]

Cedric, did you hear that hilarious line I ad-libbed down in Arkansas? A woman in a town meeting told me she was from DeQueen, and I said, "That's right next to DeKing." [Laughter] You've got to admit that's pretty good, Cedric. [Laughter] That's what you call sophisticated re-par-tay. [Laughter]

And then out in Montana, I told a joke about a cattle guard, which, to be honest, didn't get a very big laugh—actually, none. [Laughter] But Cedric, I think you'll appreciate this, and you can use it if you want to.

See, there was this city slicker who was driving around lost, and he came across this old cowboy. And so the city slicker asked the old guy how to get to the nearest town, and the——

[At this point, the First Lady interrupted the President and provided the First Family's contribution to the entertainment for the evening.]

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8:40 p.m. at the Hilton Washington Hotel. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks on Presenting the Preserve America Presidential Awards

May 2, 2005

The President. A couple of funny lines one evening and she gets carried away. *[Laughter]* Laura Leno Bush. *[Laughter]*

We welcome you to the White House. We welcome you to the Rose Garden. I hope you think it's as beautiful a place as we do, and we're honored to have some of America's outstanding community leaders and preservationists with us.

Laura is a preservationist. She's done a lot of good work here at the White House. She's helped restore the Cabinet Room. Most recently she restored the Lincoln Bedroom, based upon old photos. And you've left your marks in your communities, and she's going to leave a great mark here in Washington, DC, as well. I'm really proud of her. And we're both proud of the hard work you're doing to preserve historic resources in your communities and helping to sustain the national memory for future generations.

I appreciate Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton for joining us. Welcome, Madam Secretary. And I want to thank Fran Mainella, who is the Director of the National Parks system. Thanks for coming.

I appreciate Congressmen John Barrow of Georgia and Donna Christensen of the Virgin Islands. Welcome. Glad you both are here. Thank you for coming.

I appreciate Bruce Cole being here. He's the Chairman of the National Endowment of the Humanities. And I want to thank my

longtime friend from Texas, John Nau, who is the Chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Welcome. And Bobbie, good to see you, Bobbie.

Like you all, Laura and I want every American to have a chance to learn about this country's history and to enjoy our national treasures. So in 2003, we created the Preserve America Presidential Awards to recognize outstanding contributions to America's cultural and national heritage. The efforts of today's award winners have drawn tourists to museums and towns, created jobs, and revitalized neighborhoods. They've also opened new opportunities for learning.

The first Preserve America award winner we honor this year has helped extend the legacy of one of Laura's favorite authors, Edith Wharton. When we first moved to the White House, she was reading Edith Wharton's books. Sometimes it was hard to get her to turn off the light. *[Laughter]* By the way, this wasn't the first time she read Edith Wharton's books; it was the second time she read Edith Wharton's books.

And today we are proud to recognize the efforts of Edith Wharton Restoration to restore The Mount, the Massachusetts country estate of this American literary icon. Edith Wharton once said that there are two ways of spreading light, to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it. Your work reflects her light and will enrich our national heritage. Congratulations. Thank you all for coming.

The second award recipient is close to our hearts. The Texas Heritage Trails Program has mapped out special driving routes through the State to encourage regional tourism and bring some of Texas' proud history to light. Parents can take their children on a drive to learn about pioneers and cowboys. *[Laughter]* That would not be the Dallas Cowboys, although they're—*[laughter]*. And as they do so, they get to see the great diversity and beauty of the Texas landscape.

One potential visitor even expressed interest in riding the whole 650-mile Texas Independence Trail on a bicycle. That was not me. *[Laughter]* When I move back to Texas, I can't wait to see the delights of the trail again.

Congratulations, and welcome.

Our third award recipient has restored a site almost as old as America, itself. In Sainte Genevieve, Missouri, Bolduc Historic Properties has fixed up some of the State's first French Colonial homes, right on the banks of the Mississippi River. The restoration of the 18th Bolduc House has attracted visitors from around the country and has drawn rave reviews. Historical restoration is a job for—

The First Lady. Eighteenth century. [Laughter]

The President. You've become a comedian and an editor. [Laughter] We're glad you're here.

Historical restoration is a job for perfectionists, as I was saying. [Laughter] And our fourth recipient teaches us an important lesson: If something is worth doing, it is worth doing right. When the Historic Savannah Foundation and Davenport House Committee discovered that an earlier restoration on the Isaiah Davenport House Museum was historically inaccurate, they started over. Isn't that right? And you got the job done right this time.

The Davenport House inspired Savannah's unique ethic of preservation and led to the restoration of hundreds of other historic buildings. The city of Savannah has become a model for other towns to emulate. Tourists visiting historic sites contributed more than a billion dollars to Savannah's economy last year.

We welcome you here. Congratulations on doing well.

Again, Laura and I welcome you. Establishing the Presidential Awards is a small way of encouraging acts of preservation around our country. We look forward to giving the awards next year. We hope those who are listening become inspired by the examples of our recipients. Again, we congratulate our recipients and thank you for a job well done. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 10:25 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John L. Nau III, Chairman, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and his wife, Barbara "Bobbie" E. Nau. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks in a Discussion on Strengthening Social Security in Canton, Mississippi

May 3, 2005

The President. Thank you all very much. Please be seated. Thank you very much for the warm welcome. My first observation is, is that I overdressed. [Laughter] And my second observation is, what an amazing facility you have here. I mean, you're coming in on the highway, and all of a sudden the Nissan plant starts to—shows up, and it lasts for a long time. So thanks for having me.

I want to congratulate the dreamers and doers who had this plant here, and I want to thank the workers for making it work. You can have a—you know what I know, you can have a pretty building, but if you don't have a motivated, highly skilled workforce, nothing is coming out. And I want to thank you all for showing the world that America can compete with anybody.

I want to thank the folks who greeted me, Dan Gaudette and Jim Morton, Greg Daniels, Dave Boyer—thank you all for your hospitality. Thanks for letting us come. I particularly want to thank you all for taking time out of your busy work schedules. Hope it wasn't an inconvenience to get you off the line. [Laughter] I know you want me to be short, so you can get back to work. [Laughter] No—okay, I won't be.

I've got something I want to talk about, and I'm going to spend a little time on Social Security. This is an incredibly important subject for a lot of folks. So this is going to be an educational experience, and I've asked some of our fellow citizens to join me up here, to make it clear to you all why I'm talking about this issue to begin with.

Before I do, there's some people I want to recognize, starting with the great Governor of the State of Mississippi, Haley Barbour. Welcome, Governor. Thank you. And his wife, Marsha, the first lady. Haley married well, and so did I. I don't know about you, Haley, but my wife has become quite a one-liner, and she can deliver those one-liners. I called her Laura Leno Bush the other day. I love her dearly. She is a fabulous woman. She is a—and a great First Lady. I'm sorry she's not with me here today.

I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor, Amy Tuck, for joining us. Governor, thank you for being here.

Traveling with me is the Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings. Thanks for coming, Madam Secretary.

Here's what we believe in Washington, at least Margaret and I believe this: Every child can learn. We believe that. We don't accept a system that simply shuffles kids through school without teaching them how to read and write and add and subtract. I believe schools ought to set high expectations, and I believe we ought to measure to determine whether to not each child is learning to read and write. And by measuring, we can figure out who needs help early, before it's too late. I believe it when I say it, that we should have no child left behind in America, by insisting on high standards in our schools.

I'm traveling with some high—high power out of Washington today. Senator Trent Lott, head of the Budget Committee and a great friend, is with us—thank you for being, Senator—and Tricia Lott. That's not Tricia; that's the granddaughter. And the head of the Appropriations Committee, Senator Thad Cochran—thank you both for being here. The Senator and I traveled down on Air Force One together, and I guess the message I heard was, "Don't forget Mississippi, Mr. President."

I appreciate Congressman Roger Wicker and Congressman Chip Pickering joining us today. Thank you guys for coming. You might be aware of the Pickering name. I was proud to appoint Chip's dad, Judge Charles Pickering, to the Fifth Court. What a fine man he was and what a fine judge he was, and give him our best, please, Chip.

The great Senator Travis Lee is with us. Senator, appreciate you coming. How about the Mayor of Canton, Fred Esco. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Appreciate you.

There are a lot of other folks. If I spent time naming them, you'd never get back to work. So I'm going to stop trying to name them all. But I do want to name one other person. I had the honor of meeting Ruth Wilson today when I landed there in Jackson Airport. Ruth is a longtime volunteer. She helped organize a program at her church that has established a food pantry, an academic

tutoring program, a clothes closet, and a transportation service for the elderly. The reason I bring up Ruth is I want to remind you all that the great strength of America lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens.

Some people say the strength of America is our military. We've got a strong military, and I can assure you we're going to keep it that way. Some people say it's because of our economy—is the biggest in the world. That's important, and we're going to keep the environment such that we'll continue to expand jobs across America. But the true strength of America is the fact we've got people like Ruth who are willing to take time out of their lives to feed the hungry, to provide shelter for the homeless, to love a neighbor just like you would like to be loved yourself.

If you want to serve America, join the army of compassion, volunteer, make a difference in somebody's life. Help change this great country one heart and one soul at a time, just like Ruth Wilson is. Ruth, thank you for coming. I don't know where you are—there you are. Welcome.

I'm here to talk about the Social Security system. I've spent a lot of time working on this issue. I believe the job of a President is to confront problems and not pass them on to future Presidents or future Congresses. I think you expect people in office, like me, if we see a problem, to deal with it and not say, "Oh, it's too big a political risk to deal with it," or maybe, "I don't feel like dealing with it," or maybe, "Somebody says I shouldn't deal with it." I believe you send people to office to say, "Here is a problem" and to take it on squarely. And that's exactly why I'm sitting here today in Canton, Mississippi, because I see a problem in Social Security. And I believe I have a duty as your President to talk about the problem and talk about the solution. And here's the problem.

First, Franklin Roosevelt did a smart thing when it came time to setting up Social Security. Social Security checks have meant a lot to a lot of people. You know what I'm talking about. Your moms and dads or your grandparents count on that check. We've got some people sitting up here today who count on that check. I fully understand that when you're talking about Social Security, you're

talking about something really important for a lot of people. And therefore, the first thing I want to leave you with is that if you're getting a Social Security check today, you're going to keep getting your check. I don't care what the propagandists say. I don't care what the politicians say. Nobody is going to take your check away, and it's important for you to understand that.

Matter of fact, if you were born in 1950—before 1950, nothing is going to change. In other words, the system is solvent for you. The problem is if you're a younger worker. And see, here's the problem: A bunch of baby boomers just like me are getting ready to retire. I reach retirement age in 4 years from now. That's a convenient time for me to retire. *[Laughter]* I turn 62. The Government says when you're 62, you can start drawing a check. There are a lot of us. As a matter of fact, there's 40 million retirees today. There's over 70 million that will be fully retired when the baby boomers retire completely. That's 70 million people, nearly double the amount of people today on Social Security.

And secondly, we're living a lot longer. I try to stay in shape. I exercise and all that, try to do—make smart decisions with my body. I plan on living a long time, and so do a lot of other people my age. We're living longer than the previous generation. You've got a lot of people getting ready to retire who are living longer than the previous generation, and we've been promised greater benefits. In other words, you have people running for office saying, "Vote for me. I'm going to make sure the baby boomers get greater benefits than the previous generation." So think about that math for a second, particularly if you're a younger worker. You got a lot of people like me living longer than ever before, been promised a lot of benefits, and there's fewer of you paying into the system.

You see, in 1950, there was 15 workers paying into the system for every beneficiary—16 workers for every beneficiary. Today, there is 3.3 workers, fewer of you all paying for people like me, who are going to live longer and have been promised greater benefits.

Now, this is a pay-as-you-go system. You pay in, and we go ahead and pay out in Washington. You pay into the system—some people say, "Well, there's a Social Security trust. We'll just take your money and hold it for you and give it back to you when you retire." That's not the way the system works. Part of my responsibility as your President is to tell you exactly what's going on, to lay it right out there for you to hear. The way it works in Social Security is your payroll taxes—and you pay a lot of payroll taxes—go into the system, and we're paying for retirees, like two of the people sitting up here today. And if we have any money left over, it goes to fund Government programs. And all that's left is an IOU. That's how the system works. And so you're paying in, and it's going out. Nobody is—you're not paying in, and we're holding the money for you. You're paying in, and it's going out. And in 2017, because baby boomers like me are getting ready to retire, the system starts to go in the red. In 2027, it's \$200 billion a year in the red. In 2030, it's 300 billion; 2041, it is bankrupt. In other words, it's out.

So think about what I'm telling you. This is the math, folks; this is exactly what's going to take place unless we do something about it. I'm ready to—people like me are retiring. We expect the Government to make good on the promise, of course. But yet, we don't have enough money coming into the system to do so. So a lot of younger workers out there will be paying into a system that's bankrupt, and that's not fair.

And that's why I've taken on this issue, and that's why I'm going to continue traveling the country talking about the need to make sure the safety net of retirement is not only good for those who have retired, but it's good for a generation coming up.

Now, I talked about—the other day I had a press conference, and I've spoken about this issue at the—during my State of the Union Address. I said, "Look, I not only have a responsibility to lay out the problem; I've got a responsibility to start helping people come up with the solution." It's one thing to lay out the problem; it's another thing to stand up and say, "Here's some ideas to move forward. Here's some ways we can work together."

First and foremost, future generations ought to receive benefits equal to or greater than the previous generation. So I think if you've been working all your life, you ought to receive a benefit equal to or greater than the promises that I got. I think that's a fair system. So in other words, that's an important principle for people to listen to.

Secondly, if you work hard and—Social Security your entire life, you will not retire into poverty. The current system today, by the way, doesn't say that. The current system says you could work all your life and may end up in poverty. I don't think that's fair. I think people who have worked hard all their life and paying into the Social Security system ought to have a program that makes sure they won't retire into poverty.

And so, therefore, I believe benefits for lower income workers should grow faster than benefits for higher income workers, just to make sure that someone doesn't retire into poverty. You know, you hear all this talk about benefit cuts; we're talking about making sure benefits grow at the rate of inflation. That's what we're talking about. You've been promised something; it ought to grow at the rate of inflation. Today, if you're an upper income worker, it grows at the rate of wage growth. What I'm telling people is, is that ought to be applying for younger—lower income workers but not all workers, so that the system can take care of those at the lower income scale. That makes sense to me.

I hope it makes sense to the United States Congress. I think Franklin Roosevelt would be proud to make sure of this: If you work all your life and contribute to Social Security, you should not retire into poverty. I think that's a principle that makes sense. I think it's also important for our elected leaders, both Democrats and Republicans, to come to the table. The American people now understand we have a problem. And our leaders must choose: Do nothing and guarantee a massive tax hike or a 30 percent benefit cut, or act now to keep the promises of Social Security for the 21st century.

The reason I say do nothing and get a tax hike—if we don't do anything, it's estimated that younger workers will have to pay an 18-percent property—payroll tax to make good on the promises. If you don't like 12, try 18.

That's a lot. Payroll taxes are some of the highest taxes people pay here in America, and the idea of not having the political will to address Social Security and sticking younger workers with a high payroll tax doesn't make any sense to me.

Now, I know, sometimes Washington locks down. They say, "Well, we can't do this. It will help a Republican or help a Democrat." We've got to get rid of that kind of thinking in Washington, DC. We're talking about—[*applause*].

I've got one other idea I want to talk to you about. By the way, the idea I laid out the other day about growing benefits at the rate of inflation for lower income workers—rate of inflation for upper income workers and rate of wages for lower income workers solves most of the problem, long-term problem. There's some other things we can work with Congress on to make sure that younger workers have got a system available for them.

Nothing changes for our seniors; I'm talking about those of you born prior to 1950. I'm really talking about the younger workers, because if we don't do anything, you're going to have a huge bill to pay one way or the other.

Now, I've got another idea that I want Congress to consider, and that is being able to take some of your own money, your payroll tax that you pay in the system, and the Government allow you to set up a personal savings account. First of all, it's your money that you send into Washington, not Washington's money. It's your money. We kind of like to spend your money up there. Remember, this is a system you pay in; we take care of the retirees; any money left over, we pay for other programs. Pretty soon the amount of money you send in is going to be less than the money owed to retirees, and it's going to go into the red. That's why if we don't do anything you're going to end up paying more taxes or we have to cut benefits. But it's your money.

Secondly, I think it's really important to recognize that if you grow your money at 4 percent or 5 percent, it's going to amount to a lot more money than if you keep it in the Government and the Government can grow it at 1.8 percent. It's how interest continues to grow. Some of you may have

401(k)s, and you're watching that money begin to grow. And you hold it in there, and it grows over time, and it starts to—the growth starts to accumulate. It's called the compounding interest, and that's an important concept which is not a part of the system today.

For example, if you have a person who has worked all of her or his life at—earned \$35,000, and the Government allows you to take a third of your payroll taxes and set it up in a savings account, and that account earns a reasonable rate of return, that, by the time you retire—this is \$35,000 over your lifetime, by the way—and you can take out some of the money, a third of the money that you're paying into the Government and set up an account that's your own, you'll end up with \$250,000 by the time it comes to retire—\$250,000 plus that which the Government can afford to pay you through Social Security. That's called a personal savings account. That's your asset. The Government can't use it. It's yours. Government can't spend it on other programs. It's a hard asset.

Today, the program has got—leaves behind IOUs, paper IOUs in a filing cabinet. I think when it comes time to make sure the safety net is available for younger Americans, we ought to make sure there's hard assets. You put money in the system; you ought to have an asset you call your own as part of your retirement plan.

Now, people ask me all the time, "Well, if I have a personal savings account, what are the rules?" Well, first of all, you can't take the money and put it in the lottery. In other words, this isn't a—you can't shoot dice with it. This is part of a retirement plan, and so you'll be given the options to choose a conservative mix of bonds and stocks. If you don't want to take any risks, you can put it in Government-backed Treasury bills. But a Government-backed Treasury bill gets a greater rate of return than the money that we've got in the Federal Government. In other words, this is a chance to earn more, watch your money grow in a better way through a conservative mix of bonds and stocks.

This isn't a new idea, by the way. Guess who gets to do this right now: Federal employees, Members of the Senate and the

House of Representatives. They've decided this is a pretty good idea for themselves. Seems like to me, if it's good enough for them, it ought to be good enough for Nissan plant workers.

The good news is, these four Members of the Congress agree with me: If it's good enough for them, it's good enough for you, that you ought to be given a chance, if you want—and that's the other aspect. This is a voluntary personal savings account. This isn't the Government saying, "You've got to do this." This is saying, "If you want to do this, this option ought to be available." Some people may not want to do it. I fully understand that. You stay in the Social Security system, and when Congress gets it reformed and I sign the bill, there will be a Social Security system. But I think you ought to be given the choice. As a matter of fact, I think the more Government trusts people with their own money, in this case, the better off the country is.

Thirdly, I like the idea of people owning something. I don't believe that ownership ought to be available just for a privileged few. I don't believe that. I believe the more people are able to build assets they call their own, the better off the country is. I want more people saying, "This is my asset. This is my money, and I'm going to leave it to whomever I choose. If I have a son or a daughter, I want to be able to pass it on to the next generation."

In our country's history, the truth is a lot of people hadn't accumulated assets. And now is the time to change that. I want people to say, "This is mine. I worked hard for this. I've watched this asset base grow, and now I'm going to decide. I'm either going to use it for my retirement, if I want to, or I may decide to leave it to my son or daughter"—your choice. After all, it is your money.

I want to—I want it so that people can say, "I own something." The more people own something in America, the more people are going to say, "I really care about the future of this country." The more people own their home, the better off we are. The more people own their own retirement system and watch it grow, the better off we are.

This plan is good for low-income people, particularly low-income women. Take a 20-

year-old mom earning \$8 an hour over her career; under my idea of things, when she retires at age 63, she'd have a \$100,000 asset base, plus the Social Security plan. And that makes sense, to spread the idea of ownership beyond just the so-called "investor class." I think it does.

I'm particularly concerned about a system that hurts widows or spouses. If you—think about the system today. You work all your life; say, you die before you're 62 years old. You worked 30 years or 40 years, and you leave a widow. If she's working, like most families are now two-working households, if she's working she'll—when she turns time to retire, she'll get to choose her plan, her benefits or the husband's benefits, which are ever higher, but not both. So the spouse has been working all its life—his life, putting a lot of money in the system, dies early, and the Government says, "You can have one or the other but not both," even though they've been working hard to pay in the system, paying those payroll taxes.

If you allow somebody, if they so choose, to have a personal savings account, you've got yourself an asset that you can pass on to your spouse. It's your money. You can watch it grow, and you can decide where that money goes. To me, this is a lot fairer system. It makes a lot of sense to trust the people with their money.

So don't trust my judgment on this, alone. Trust somebody else, named Sam Beard. He's joined us. He's an expert. He's a fellow who has studied this issue a long time. He happens to be a Democrat. I first got to know Sam when I put together a panel headed by a former Senator from New York who was a Democrat, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. I got into office in 2001, I said—and campaigned on it, by the way—I said, "I want to do something about Social Security if I win." And so I decided to put together a panel of Democrats and Republicans to see what they came up with. First of all, they had the right spirit about all this business. They didn't say, "I'm serving on this to enhance one political party over another." They said, "We're people who want to take an objective look. Is there a problem, and if so, can we do something about it?"

So, Sam, thanks for joining. Welcome. You might share some of your experiences on the Commission. Were people trying to slug each other whole time there, or they actually have a good conversation?

Samuel Beard. Well, first, Mr. President, I want to tell you I'm honored to be here, and thank you for inviting me. The next thing I want is just to underline the staggering leadership of the President. If you think about it historically, Franklin Roosevelt with the New Deal effected policy and politics for three generations. This President, by talking about creating a stakeholder and shareowner society, if we allow all Americans to set aside \$1,000 a year into an account which they own, it will be a watershed issue; it will be historic. And your leadership is tremendous.

The President. Thank you, Sam. Thank you.

Mr. Beard. So I guess I've had the privilege of doing this for 12 years, Mr. President; you're sort of a newcomer.

The President. That's right, yes. [*Inaudible*—otherwise my hair wouldn't have gone white.

Mr. Beard. I've had the privilege of making 5,000 presentations all across the country, and I want to underline what the President is saying. This is essential for the economic health and future of America and to save Social Security, and it needs to be done as a nonpartisan issue.

[*At this point, Mr. Beard, president, Economic Security 2000, Wilmington, DE, made further remarks.*]

The President. Thanks, Sam. Good job. I appreciate it. Well-spoken.

Deanie Smith.

Deanie Smith. My name is Deanie Smith. I'm 84 years old.

The President. You don't look a day over 82. [*Laughter*]

Mrs. Smith. Thank you, Mr. President. Twenty years ago, I retired after about 30 years of Federal service. And I draw my retirement. And then my husband, who was a veteran in World War II—he's deceased now—I draw his Social Security. I'm not worried about that. But it's my two baby boomers and their sons that I'm worried about.

The President. Well, let me ask you something. You count on that Social Security check?

Mrs. Smith. I do—needed.

The President. Yes. A lot of people count on that check. You know what I'm talking about. You've got folks that are counting on the check. You've got a grandmother or a grandfather that go to that mailbox, count on the check.

Mrs. Smith. Go to the bank.

The President. Yes. And I understand when you talk about Social Security, somebody is going to pop up and try to frighten Deanie Smith or friends. That's how you stop things in American politics; you just try to scare people. And I appreciate you saying that you—

Mrs. Smith. I appreciate your saying it's going to be safe too.

The President. Well, that's it, and I'm going to keep saying it, because it's the truth. And everybody who's involved with this issue knows it's the truth. That's important. It's important for younger workers to hear we've got a problem, and it's important for people like Deanie to understand she's going to get her check.

Keep going. You're on a roll. [Laughter]

Mrs. Smith. Well, what I'm concerned about is my son and my daughter and their two sons. Will there be anything left? My son will be eligible to retire—well, he's already retired, but he can't draw Social Security for 9 years. And my daughter is already—

The President. This is a man who retired early.

Mrs. Smith. My daughter is 55, and she's going to need some help too, and so are the two grandsons.

The President. I'd be really worried about your grandsons. See, if you're a younger worker sitting out there or a kid in high school or junior high, you've got a serious problem facing you. You heard the man: Either going to pay 18-percent payroll tax, or there's going to be significant benefit cuts. And they're not going to be cutting benefits significantly on baby boomers. There's just too many of us. Therefore, you're going to have to pay for it. That would be my guess about the political dynamics.

This is a generational issue, folks. Once we assure the grandmoms they're going to get their check—and you are going to get your check—then you begin to hear what Deanie starts saying, "What about my grandkids?" That's what people in Congress are going to start hearing. They're going to hear, "We've got a problem," and then we're going to hear grandparents say, "I'm worried about my grandkids, Member of Congress. I don't care what your party is. I don't care what your political affiliation is. How about coming together to solve this so we don't saddle a young generation with a huge tax bill?" That's how I think about it.

And I appreciate you understanding that you're going to get your check. You hold the rest of us to account to make sure we take care of your grandkids.

Mrs. Smith. And I'm going to insist my grandsons do the right thing.

The President. There you go. Welcome. Coley Bailey, right out of Coffeetown, Mississippi.

Coley Bailey. Yes, sir.

The President. What do you do for a living?

Mr. Bailey. I'm a cotton farmer.

The President. Cotton farmer.

Mr. Bailey. Yes, sir.

The President. You're probably going to tell me the cotton prices aren't high enough and the weather is not any good.

Mr. Bailey. That's exactly what I was going to say. [Laughter]

The President. Good. You got any kids?

Mr. Bailey. Yes, sir. I've got—my wife is here in the audience. Her name is Jody. We've got two children: a daughter, MacKenzie, is 4 years old, and then my son, Cole, is 4 months old.

The President. Good. Well, so why is a farmer sitting up here talking about Social Security?

Mr. Bailey. Well, my concern with it is there won't be any Social Security for my wife and I when we reach retirement age.

The President. You're 33?

Mr. Bailey. I'm 32.

The President. Thirty-two—I was trying to get you moving here a little faster. [Laughter] You realize, if you're a self-employed

farmer, you put the whole 12.4 percent into the system.

Mr. Bailey. Yes, sir.

The President. You're putting 6.2 percent when you're working, but if you're self-employed, small-business owners—a lot of small-business owners here in Mississippi, a lot of farmers in Mississippi, a lot of people working on their own account in Mississippi—they put the entire 12.4 percent in.

Mr. Bailey. Yes, sir.

The President. So you're doubly concerned.

Mr. Bailey. And also what's concerning also, without the personal retirement accounts that you're proposing, we're so close on the farming community with the finances; it would really trouble a lot of them to go from the 12 percent to the 18 percent, plus pay that half of 18 percent that we will be required to pay.

The President. Yes. See, what he's saying is, there's a cloudy future. Do you know how many young people are saying, "I'm not so sure I'm going to see anything from Social Security." It's beginning to sink in. People say, "Well, I'm more likely to see a UFO than I am a Social Security check if I'm 35 and under." It's beginning to—people are beginning to understand the nature of the issue.

And I mean, people can say, "Well, he's making up the numbers." These numbers are real, folks, that we're just talking about. You heard Sam. He's studied this issue for a long time. My job is to lay it out, to tell you the truth. You can figure out whether or not somebody has got the right solution or not. But I'm telling you right now, if you're 35 years old, you don't think you're going to see a dime. A lot of people don't feel that way, and particularly if you got kids. So he's looking at putting 12.4 percent payroll tax into the system, not thinking he's going to see something coming out of it. No wonder he's sitting up here talking to the President. He's not out there plowing his fields.

Mr. Bailey. Yes, sir. We—one thing that my wife and I have done, when we got married almost 9 years ago, we were worried about—when we were talking about retirement, we didn't even consider Social Security at that—9 years ago.

The President. Any other youngsters think that way? [Applause] Talk to a lot—there you go. Sad, isn't it? We're going to change it. That's why we're sitting here. That's why we're talking about the issue, is to make sure that when I say, "Are you worried about seeing your Social Security," those hands won't go up, because we have done our duty—both Republicans and Democrats have done our duty to fix the system.

Go ahead.

Mr. Bailey. What we have done to supplement or to aid in our retirement is—since the Roth IRA has become available—I think Senator Roth from Delaware introduced it in '97, and it was available in 1998. So we—

The President. There you go—he's the kind of farmer who understands history.

Go ahead.

Mr. Bailey. But we have fully funded the maximum amount every year, the 8 years we've been available to us.

The President. Roth IRA, he's watching his money grow. He and his wife said, "I'm going to put a little money aside and watch it grow," right?

Mr. Bailey. The one interesting thing is that, of course, we can go online, or I can call Legg Mason here in Jackson who controls it for me, and I can see what it's doing and how it's doing. And just the way that the interest is compounded, and it's grown over the time that we've done it, it's a good—I would definitely be in support of the personal retirement account.

The President. See, he's used to investing. You know what's amazing about America? When I was your age, I don't think we spent a lot of time on 401(k)s—we're about to talk to a 401(k) owner here in a minute—or IRAs. I just don't remember. I probably didn't, since they didn't exist. And we got a whole group of youngsters coming up in America today—32-year-old cotton farmer, I suspect a lot of Nissan workers, who understand what it means to watch your own assets grow and to make investment decisions.

In other words, there's a cultural change in America. Congress is lagging behind the cultural change, but there's a lot of folks who are comfortable about watching their own money grow, a whole lot of folks. And it

seems like to me to make sense that if Nissan thinks it's all right, if this cotton farmer takes advantage of a program, that when it comes time to making sure the Social Security system is modern, that we ought to give workers all across the country the same opportunities.

Ready to go? Cynthia Roberts.

Cynthia Roberts. Again, thank you, Mr. President.

The President. What do you do, Cynthia?

Mrs. Roberts. I'm a human resource representative here at the Canton facility for Nissan.

The President. Right here?

Mrs. Roberts. Right here.

The President. Is it okay for these people to take a little extra time off? [Laughter]

Mrs. Roberts. I've worked here for about 3 years now and loved every minute of it. My thoughts are similar to Coley's, as far as Social Security. I don't really think those benefits will be here, not only for myself but also for my two children who are 7 and 2 years old.

The President. See, again, I know I'm getting repetitive, but I hear this story a lot, a younger mom saying, "Mr. President, I don't think the benefits are going to be there for me. I'm worried about it." She's beginning to understand the math. You a 401(k) owner?

Mrs. Roberts. I am a 401(k) owner.

The President. How cool is that? Owns her own assets. How does it work here at Nissan? How does it work at Nissan?

Mrs. Roberts. Currently, what happens is the 401(k), the company will match 60 percent for up to 5 percent.

The President. Yes. And so—are you watching—you're watching the account pretty carefully?

Mrs. Roberts. I do watch. I get a quarterly statement, and I do watch those monies very closely. I do not like to lose money. [Laughter]

The President. No, I don't blame you. Don't shoot any dice, then. [Laughter]

Mrs. Roberts. But 401(k) has proved to work out great for me and my family.

The President. See, it's interesting, isn't it? I can't tell you how good it is for the country to be sitting next to Cynthia Roberts, working right here at Nissan, and she's talking to me about watching her assets grow.

She gets a quarterly statement. It's a statement that says, "Here's what you own, and here's how it's growing." It's hers. Nobody can take it away from her. The Government can't decide, "Well, we need this for another program." It's your money.

I think it makes sense in a modern Social Security system for people, opening up a quarterly statement that the Government can't spend, the Government can't take away, that you can decide what to do with it. And that's what Cynthia is talking about. Isn't that right?

Mrs. Roberts. That's right.

The President. Is it growing?

Mrs. Roberts. Yes, it has grown substantially.

The President. Yes, has grown substantially. [Laughter] I can promise you this: Your money—your money in the Government—if the Government takes your money through your payroll tax, it's not growing substantially. It's growing a little bitty. And at her age, that money begins—when it grows substantially early on, and she keeps reinvesting, and it—it grows substantially a lot quicker over time. And that's important for people to figure out.

Was it hard to invest your own money? Was it hard to get used to?

Mrs. Roberts. No, it wasn't hard. There are different options. I currently use some—one with our 401(k) company to help me watch my monies and to monitor the investments that I make.

The President. So is there—it's a mix of bonds and stocks?

Mrs. Roberts. It is mostly all bonds and minimal stocks, but some stocks. I do take some risk.

The President. Sure. But she gets—well, you're young, you ought to. She can design a portfolio. You hear what she's saying? She's saying they give her a chance to manage her own money, and she talks to an expert and gets to design the portfolio that meets her needs. Doesn't that make sense? It's her money to begin with. The Government ought to do the same thing through the Social Security system. And then Cynthia gets to decide who to leave it to. Isn't that right?

Mrs. Roberts. That is correct.

The President. Unless you decide to spend it when you retire.

Mrs. Roberts. No, I'm not going to spend it. [Laughter]

The President. So you view this as a way to not only make sure that there's something for you when you retire—we'll get the Social Security system fixed so that you can't sit up here with the next President you visit with and say, "I don't think I'm ever going to see a dime." I think if we keep talking about this to Congress, it is going to say, "Oops, people like Cynthia know we've got a problem, and they expect us to get something done." So we're going to keep working on it. But in the meantime, you're building up an asset base—I presume with your children in mind.

Mrs. Roberts. That is correct. They are always in mind.

The President. Yes, always on your mind.

Mrs. Roberts. Always on my mind.

The President. I'm afraid I'm always on my mother's mind too, you know? [Laughter] Anyway, thanks for coming, and thanks for representing the workforce here. You did good, really good.

I'm just curious—anybody else got a 401(k)? [Applause] I rest my case. I rest my case. Are you watching your own money grow? Starting to make sense to have that money you're contributing to the—through the payroll tax to be able to—a part of that to be able to do the same thing? Seems like it makes sense, to me.

Finally, we're going to end with DeLois Killen. Welcome.

DeLois Killen. Thank you, Mr. President. It's an honor.

The President. Where are you from, DeLois?

Mrs. Killen. I am from Union, Mississippi.

The President. Union, Mississippi. And what do you do?

Mrs. Killen. I live in Union. I'm 71 years old.

The President. And you're working.

Mrs. Killen. I am semi-retired. I work for the city of Union at the Police Department as the dispatcher.

The President. There you go. Whatever you do, don't let her call your car plates. [Laughter] Good, thanks for working.

Mrs. Killen. I need to work.

The President. You've been working all your life.

Mrs. Killen. I have been working all my life. And if it wasn't for my Social Security check, I really couldn't make ends meet.

The President. Right. But your Social Security check is not providing enough so that you can retire.

Mrs. Killen. It is not. If I had known what these younger people know now and had the opportunities that they have, I would have had something besides Social Security.

The President. Yes, but that's it for you.

Mrs. Killen. It is.

The President. Yes. That's really important for people to understand, is that DeLois counts on the Social Security check she is—

Mrs. Killen. Very definitely.

The President. Yes, you're over retirement age—barely. [Laughter] She has to keep working. The system didn't provide enough for her to retire on.

Mrs. Killen. I'm just another desperate housewife. [Laughter]

The President. This has been my week to be around funny women, you know? [Laughter] Good one. [Laughter] Once again, I'm speechless. [Laughter] Keep going. Now, you're on a roll.

Mrs. Killen. Well, I depend on my Social Security for half of my income at least.

The President. Yes.

Mrs. Killen. And I'm so grateful that you say we are not going to lose it, because I intend to be here a long time yet.

The President. That's right.

Mrs. Killen. And I want to be self-sufficient. I want to take care of myself.

The President. There you go.

Mrs. Killen. And with Social Security benefits coming in regularly, I can plan for the future.

The President. That's good. It's really important for our seniors when they hear this debate to have peace of mind, that we're really talking about the youngsters, the young workers, and not you, DeLois. The debate is aimed at making sure the safety net is good for a younger generation of Americans. You're fine. And people born prior to 1950 are fine. But if you're young and working, think about this: The system goes broke in 2041. It's not all that long from now, really, when you think about it. And you work all

your life putting your money into a system that's going broke—a little discouraging.

We have an obligation and a duty to fix this. I'm going to continue traveling the country, DeLois, talking about the problem. People in America are beginning to understand we've got a problem. People are beginning to figure it out. A lot of younger Americans are now beginning to pay attention to this issue. If I were you, I'd be paying attention to it too. You got a payroll tax, putting your payroll tax in the system that's going broke. I'd be out there wondering what the heck is going to happen in Washington, DC, to make sure the money I'm putting in is worthwhile.

I'm going to continue assuring our seniors that they're going to receive their checks. You tell your grandma and granddads and your mother and dads, this Government of yours will keep its promise. And I'm going to continue talking to the younger people of America and say that we're going to be wise about how we fix the system. We're going to fix the safety net, and as we do, we're going to make it a better deal for you. As we do, we're going to let you take some of your own money and watch it grow so you can build your own asset base, so you can pass it on to whomever you chose.

We've got a great opportunity here to show the American people that Washington isn't all politics, that Washington has got the capacity to rise above partisan bickering and solve an important problem once and for all. And when we do, when we do, and when we get it done, we'll all be able to say we have done our duty.

I want to thank you all for giving me a chance to come by. God bless you all, and God bless our families. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:17 p.m. at the Nissan North America Manufacturing Plant. In his remarks, he referred to Daniel A. Gaudette, senior vice president for North American Manufacturing and Quality Assurance, James C. Morton, senior vice president for Administration and Finance, Greg Daniels, senior vice president for U.S. Manufacturing, and Dave Boyer, vice president of Manufacturing in Canton, Nissan North America, Inc.; Gov. Haley Barbour and Lt. Gov. Amy Tuck of Mississippi; and Travis Lane Little, president pro tempore, Mississippi State senate.

Proclamation 7893—National Observance of the 60th Anniversary of the End of World War II, 2005

May 3, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Sixty years ago, the flags of freedom unfurled across Europe and Asia as victorious American and Allied troops brought World War II to an end. Freedom prevailed when millions were liberated from oppression and tyranny was replaced by democracy.

The years of World War II were a hard, heroic, and gallant time in the life of our country. When it mattered most, a generation of Americans showed the finest qualities of our Nation and of humanity. More than 16 million Americans served during World War II, putting on the uniform of the Soldier, the Sailor, the Airman, the Marine, the Coast Guardsman, or the Merchant Mariner. They were the sons and daughters of a peaceful country, who gave the best years of their lives to the greatest mission our country ever accepted. They earned 464 Medals of Honor, and over 400,000 made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom. Millions more supported the war effort at home—caring for the injured and working in factories to provide supplies to those fighting in distant places like Midway, Normandy, Iwo Jima, and Bastogne.

As the war drew to a close, Americans remained united in support of the vital cause of restoring the liberty of mankind. When the end of the war in Europe was announced on May 8, 1945, hundreds of people rushed to the White House to celebrate the triumph of freedom. President Harry Truman addressed the American people from the White House and said, "For this victory, we join in offering our thanks to the Providence which has guided and sustained us through the dark days of adversity." In the following months, the war in the Pacific was won and a grateful Nation began welcoming home liberty's heroes. Many who had left America's farms and cities as young men and women returned as seasoned veterans ready to finish their education, start families, and assume leadership roles in their communities.

Today, as we wage the war on terror and work to extend peace and freedom around the world, our service men and women follow in the footsteps of our World War II veterans by upholding the noble tradition of duty, honor, and love of country. Like generations before them, America's Armed Forces are among the world's greatest forces for good, answering today's dangers and challenges with firm resolve. Their vital mission will help secure our Nation in a new century, and all Americans are grateful for their courage, devotion to duty, and sacrifice.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim 2005 as the National Observance of the 60th Anniversary of the End of World War II. I urge all Americans to mark this observance with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities in honor of the Americans who served in World War II and all those who supported and contributed their efforts from the home front during this extraordinary time in history.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this third day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:15 a.m., May 4, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 5.

Proclamation 7894—Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, 2005

May 3, 2005

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

Millions of Americans proudly trace their ancestry to the many nations that make up Asia and the Pacific islands. For generations, Americans of Asian/Pacific heritage have strengthened our Nation through their

achievements in all walks of life, including business, politics, education, community service, the arts, and science.

This month we honor Asian/Pacific Americans for their contributions to our Nation's growth and development and to the spread of freedom around the world. This year's theme, "Liberty and Freedom for All," honors the sacrifices of Asian/Pacific Americans in the defense of freedom and democracy. We remember the bravery of soldiers of Asian/Pacific descent who have served in our military. These proud patriots stepped forward and fought for the security of our country and the peace of the world, and they will always hold a cherished place in our history. As we confront the challenges of the 21st century and fight the war on terror, Americans of Asian/Pacific descent continue to serve in the Armed Forces and are working to secure our homeland and promote peace and liberty around the world. Their dedication and patriotism uphold the highest ideals of our country.

To honor the achievements and contributions of Asian/Pacific Americans, the Congress by Public Law 102-450 as amended, has designated the month of May each year as "Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 2005 as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month. I call upon the people of the United States to learn more about the history of Asian/Pacific Americans and their many contributions to our Nation and to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this third day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:15 a.m., May 4, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 5.

Proclamation 7895—Older Americans Month, 2005

May 3, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Older Americans teach us the timeless lessons of courage, sacrifice, and love. By sharing their wisdom and experience, they serve as role models for future generations. During Older Americans Month, we pay tribute to our senior citizens and their contributions to our Nation.

Our seniors deserve our greatest respect. Their example shows us how to persevere in the face of hardship, care for others in need, and take pride in our communities. Their patriotism, service, and leadership inspire Americans and shape the character and future of our country.

Millions of Americans are now living longer, more productive lives, and many are choosing to stay active in the workforce. Senior citizens are also giving their time and talents by volunteering in many ways—from mentoring youth and participating in environmental stewardship projects to serving the homeless and assisting in emergency preparedness. More than 500,000 senior citizens volunteer through Senior Corps, a network of programs that enables older Americans to meet the needs and challenges of their communities. Through the USA Freedom Corps and Senior Corps, older Americans are dedicating their time and energy to strengthening our Nation and serving a cause greater than themselves.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Older Americans Act of 1965, which was created to improve the welfare of our seniors. By treating older Americans with the dignity and respect they deserve, we honor their legacy and contributions to our Nation. Their guidance and love enrich our country and make America a better place for all.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 2005 as Older Americans Month. I commend our

senior citizens for their many contributions to our society. I also commend the network of Federal, State, local, and tribal organizations, service and health care providers, caregivers, and dedicated volunteers who work on behalf of our senior citizens. I encourage all Americans to honor their elders, to care for those in need, and to publicly reaffirm our Nation's commitment to older Americans this month and throughout the year.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this third day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:15 a.m., May 4, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 5.

Proclamation 7896—National Day of Prayer, 2005

May 3, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Since our Nation's earliest days, prayer has given strength and comfort to Americans of all faiths. Our Founding Fathers relied on their faith to guide them as they built our democracy. Today, we continue to be inspired by God's blessings, mercy, and boundless love. As we observe this National Day of Prayer, we humbly acknowledge our reliance on the Almighty, express our gratitude for His blessings, and seek His guidance in our daily lives.

Throughout our history, our Nation has turned to prayer for strength and guidance in times of challenge and uncertainty. The Continental Congress, meeting in 1775, asked the colonies to pray for wisdom in forming a new Nation. Throughout the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln issued exhortations to prayer, calling upon the American people to humble themselves before their Maker and to serve all those in need. At the height of World War II, President

Franklin Roosevelt led our citizens in prayer over the radio, asking for God to protect our sons in battle. Today, our Nation prays for those who serve bravely in the United States Armed Forces in difficult missions around the world, and we pray for their families.

Across our country, Americans turn daily to God in reverence. We ask Him to care for all those who suffer or feel helpless, knowing that God sees their needs and calls on us to meet them. As our first President wrote in 1790, "May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths . . .". As we face the challenges of our times, God's purpose continues to guide us, and we continue to trust in the goodness of His plans.

The Congress by Public Law 100-307, as amended, has called on our citizens to reaffirm the role of prayer in our society and to honor the freedom of religion by recognizing annually a "National Day of Prayer."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 5, 2005, as a National Day of Prayer. I ask the citizens of our Nation to give thanks, each according to his or her own faith, for the liberty and blessings we have received and for God's continued guidance and protection. I also urge all Americans to join in observing this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this third day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:15 a.m., May 4, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 5.

Remarks in a Discussion on Strengthening Social Security at the Latino Small Business Economic Conference

May 4, 2005

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. *Sientese*. Thank you, Hector. Thank you for the job you're doing with the Small Business Administration. Thank you all for coming today to hear this conversation about how to make sure a very important part of our society functions well for a young generation of Latinos and people from all walks of life.

So today we're here to discuss Social Security and the importance of Social Security. And I want to thank our panelists for joining us. I want to thank the Latino Coalition for hosting this reception. As I look out into the crowd, I see a lot of familiar faces and a lot of friends. It's great to see you all again. Thank you for coming.

I want to thank Roberto de Posada, the chairman and president of the Latino Coalition. Thank you for hosting this event.

I am honored to be joined today by—or we are honored to be joined by the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee from Bakersfield, California. It's relevant he is here. After all, it's his committee that is going to write the reforms necessary to make sure the Social Security system works for a younger generation of Americans. I have worked closely with Chairman Thomas on a lot of crucial issues. When he says he can get the job done, he means he can get the job done and has proven over the past 5 years that he can get the job done. Mr. Chairman, thank you for joining us.

As well Congressman Chris Cannon from Utah is with us. Thank you for coming, Congressman; honored you're here.

Before I talk about Social Security, though, I want to remind you the war on terror goes on. And today's report on the capture of a top Al Qaida operative, Abu Faraj al-Libbi,

represents a critical victory in the war on terror. Al-Libbi was a top general for bin Laden. He was a major facilitator and a chief planner for the Al Qaida network. His arrest removes a dangerous enemy who was a direct threat to America and for those who love freedom.

I applaud the Pakistani Government for their strong cooperation in the war on terror. I applaud the Pakistani Government and President Musharraf for acting on solid intelligence to bring this man to justice. The fight continues. We'll stay on the offensive until Al Qaida is defeated.

Franklin Roosevelt did a wise thing when he set up the Social Security system. A lot of people throughout the last decades have counted on a Social Security check to help them in retirement. As a matter of fact, I'm sure you know people in your communities that rely upon their Social Security check completely to make sure they have dignity in their retirement. It was a wise idea to set up the system, and I am mindful that when anybody in Washington talks about Social Security, a wave of fear ripples through the senior community because they think somebody is about to take their check away.

So I want to open my comments to you all to assure you that your loved ones who count on Social Security will get their check. Nothing will change for today's seniors who are getting a Social Security check. If you—as a matter of fact, if you were born prior to 1950, nothing will change. The system is solvent enough to keep its promises. And that's very important for people to hear. So when you hear all these ads and propaganda saying, well, you know—this talk about making sure the Social Security system is modern and the seniors are not going to get your check, just know it's not true, and please assure seniors it's not true, because it's not.

The safety net will work for them, but there is a hole in the safety net for a younger generation of Americans coming up. And here's why—first, let me just describe the nature of the system, and that is, it's a pay-as-you-go system. You pay in payroll taxes, and the Government takes care of retirees and, with money left over, spends it on other programs. And all that is left is a file cabinet with IOUs. See, some in our country believe that the system works this way: You pay into

the system; we hold your money for you; and when you retire, we give it back to you. That's not the way it works. It's a pay-as-you-go system.

Now, the reason there's a hole in the safety net for people who are going to be paying into the pay-as-you-go system is because there are a lot of people getting ready to retire. We are called baby boomers. I happen to be one. I'm retiring in 4 years—at least I'm eligible for my retirement. [*Laughter*] I turn 62 in 4 years. There are about 75 million baby boomers who will be retired when it's all said and done. There are 40 million baby boomers—I mean, retirees today. So think about that. We have 40 million retirees today, and in relatively quick order, there's going to be over 70 million retirees. So we've got a lot more people that younger workers are going to have to pay for.

Secondly, we are living longer. I plan to live a long time. [*Laughter*] It's why I'm exercising a lot. [*Laughter*] It's why I'm making right choices about what I put in my body. And I suggest all Americans exercise more and be wise about what you eat and what you drink. It'll help you live longer, they tell me. But a lot of us are going to live longer, and we've been promised greater benefits than the previous generation.

So if you're a younger worker out there, you're now looking at more people retiring, who will be living longer—in other words, you have to keep paying more monthly benefits over time—who've been promised greater monthly benefits. And there's going to be fewer of you paying into the system. In 1950, there were 16 workers for every beneficiary. Today, there is 3.3 workers for every beneficiary. In short order, there will be two workers for every beneficiary. So young workers are going to be paying for more people living longer, getting greater benefits.

And the pay-as-you-go system goes negative in 2017. In other words, there's more money going out than coming in. And in—and every year it gets worse. That's just the way it's going to work. And so in 2027, you're going to be \$200 billion in the hole, for example. It will be 300 billion in the 2030s, and the system is going to be broke in 2041. So you've got people who are starting to pay into

the system now who are paying into a system that's not going to be around.

And I don't want to make younger workers a lot of—nervous in America. The people who ought not to be nervous are the older Americans. You're going to get your check. It's the people paying for baby boomers like me who are going to retire who ought to be paying attention to this issue, because the system is insolvent.

So I have an obligation to encourage Congress to act. And Chairman Thomas knows what I'm about to say: The longer we wait, the more expensive it's going to be. If Congress chooses to do nothing on this problem, you're either going to have to raise your payroll tax to, some estimate, 18 percent or cut benefits dramatically by 30 percent. So now is the time to get after it, in my judgment.

Obviously felt that way because in the State of the Union, I spent a lot of time talking about it and subsequently have spent a lot of time talking about it. I'm going to continue traveling our country making it clear to people we've got a problem, because, see, once they figure out we've got a problem, the next course of action is going to be to say to Congress, "How come you're not doing anything about it? How come you're allowing partisan politics to prevent good people from coming together to solve the problem?"

I have an obligation to put some things on the table, and I've been doing that. First, I believe that future generations must receive benefits equal to or greater than the benefits of today's seniors. Secondly, I believe this country needs to set a goal that says if you've worked all your life and if you paid into the retirement system, to Social Security, you should not retire in poverty. To me, that's a noble goal. Frankly, it's the kind of goal that Franklin Delano Roosevelt would strongly support.

And so in my press conference the other night, I proposed a way of calculating future benefits for future retirees that said, "If you're a low-income worker, your benefits ought to rise—rise with wage increases, and if you're an upper income worker, your benefits ought to rise with inflation." Seems fair to me. Seems like a noble calling for the United States of America, to recognize a lot of people work really hard and don't make

a lot of money, but when it comes time to retire, there ought to be dignity in retirement. I also believe that younger workers—and by the way, what—that plan alone, that part of a plan, solves the majority of the solvency issue for a generation of Americans coming up.

In other words, what I'm talking about, making sure that we permanently solve the Social Security problem, can be done. And I have an obligation to advance the process by putting out some ideas that I think are important. And I want to thank Chairman Thomas for his willingness to work with us on this issue, and I'll work with him on this issue.

Now I want to talk about something else that I think the country ought to consider, and this pertains to younger workers. I think younger workers—first of all, younger workers have been promised benefits the Government—promises that have been promised, benefits that we can't keep. That's just the way it is. And I believe I have the duty as the President to be willing to confront that fact, to tell people the truth. The younger people in America got to understand that. We've given you promises we just can't keep.

But one way to make a permanent solution to the Social Security system a better deal is to allow younger workers to take some of your own money and set it aside in a personal savings account that you can call your own. And the reason why that's important is because if you watch your money grow with a reasonable rate of interest, you know it compounds over time. There's a compound rate of interest, which means money grows and grows, bigger and bigger and bigger. For example, if you're making \$35,000 all your life, and you're allowed to take a third of your payroll taxes and set it aside in a conservative mix of bonds and stocks that have a reasonable rate of return, then when you get ready to retire, you'll have \$250,000 as part of a retirement plan. You'll get your Social Security check, whatever the Government can afford, plus money off of your nest egg.

Money grows. And the current system doesn't encourage, doesn't take advantage of compound interest. And so step one is, letting a younger person own their own—manage their own money in a conservative mix

of bonds and stocks will mean you get a better deal on your own money. This payroll tax is your money. And the Government ought to say you get a better deal on your money, and you can watch it grow.

Secondly, I like people owning something. The more people own assets, the better off America is. I reject this notion that the investor class is limited to only a certain kind of person. The more moms and dads accumulate assets, the better off it is for American families. I want more people being able to say, "This is mine. The Government can't take it away. The Government can't spend it. It's not a part of a pay-as-you-go system." And when you pass away, you can leave it to whomever you choose. That's a part of America. And more people that have that—this idea, I think, is fair. It means you get a better deal on your own money. It's fair. It encourages ownership.

Listen, the system today is a lousy deal for widows. The way it works today is, if you and your spouse are working and one of you dies early, then the spouse upon retiring gets to choose the survivor benefits that your spouse has paid into the system or your own benefits, which is ever higher, but not both. So think about that. Somebody may have died at age 52, started working at age 22, worked 30 years and put all that money in the system, and his or her spouse ends up having to choose, to decide what retirement account he or she wants, the one she contributed to or the one he contributed to, but not both. In other words, the money goes away.

In a personal savings account, as you watch your money grow, a worker sets aside money in an asset base. That asset can go to help the widow or the surviving spouse. The system isn't fair today, and we need to make it fair. And we can make it more fair for people at the lower end of the income scale.

Now, I want to—and during this conversation, some things will come out that I think probably—hopefully some questions will come out that are on your mind.

I want to address a couple of things. One, I understand there is a need for more financial literacy in America, and so I've instructed the FDIC and the SBA and the Treasury Department to work with the Latino Coalition

and the Hispanic Chamber and other groups to help make sure that financial literacy is more widespread in all neighborhoods and all communities. FDIC has got the Money Smart financial workshop program. They're going to work with the Latino Coalition. SBA has got a *negocios.gov* program on the web page. Treasury has got all kinds of financial learning materials that we can spread out. And we need your help.

Secondly, what I'm talking about, though, is happening in America already. In other words, I'm not inventing something new to say to somebody, "You can invest your own money." When I was coming up, there wasn't a lot of talk about 401(k)s or IRAs. There wasn't any. And today—yesterday I had an interesting experience. I went down to the Nissan plant in Canton, Mississippi, and it was a very diverse audience, a lot of assembly line workers. And I said, "How many of you all have got your own 401(k)?" I mean, the number of hands that went up was astounding. You've got people from all walks of life managing their money already. People are getting used to it.

Matter of fact, this was such a good idea that the United States Congress a while ago decided in the Thrift Savings Plan, the Federal Thrift Savings Plan, to allow Federal workers, Members of the United States Congress, and Members of the United States Senate to manage their own personal account. See, and the reason why is, I'm confident, they took a look at the rate of return the Government can get versus the rate of return that you can get in a conservative mix of bonds and stocks and decided they'd want their money to grow—they'd want to watch their money grow faster than that available through the Government. And so they said—they just decided, "We'll get to do this, too."

If it is good enough for a Member of the United States Congress to set aside some of his or her own money in a personal savings account so they get a better rate of return, they can pass it on to whomever they want, it ought to be good enough for workers all across the United States of America.

I am honored to be joined by Fidel Vargas today. Fidel is an interesting man. He's already been a—he's 36, and he's already been

a mayor of a California city. Did a fine job there.

You know, when I first got elected, I recognized that the Social Security issue was going to be an issue that was going to require some sound thought and reasoning. People needed to be coming together to help think about this issue. And so I set up a Commission. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the former Senator from New York, Democrat Senator, was the Chairman of it, and I asked Fidel to join.

And welcome, Fidel. Thanks for coming. He is a—well, you'll see. He knows what he's talking about.

[At this point, Fidel Vargas, managing director, TMG Advisors, Baldwin Park, CA, made brief remarks.]

Mr. Vargas. And I'm a little embarrassed to say, but I think I'll share with the President that the first time he ran, I didn't vote for the President. So excuse me for that, sir. But I'm sure—[laughter].

The President. Turns out a lot of other people didn't, either. [Laughter]

[Mr. Vargas made further remarks.]

The President. Great job. Thanks for coming. The fact that you went to Harvard bothers me more than the fact that you didn't vote for me. [Laughter]

Mr. Vargas. We both went to HBS.

The President. That's right. I forgot that part. Anyway—[laughter]—good job. Thanks for coming.

The message here is really important, that it doesn't matter whether you're a Republican or a Democrat on this issue; what matters is, do you care about the future of the country, and are you willing to set aside partisanship and work in a constructive way to get something done?

If you're a senior, you're going to get your check. You know what's happening now? A lot of grandmothers and grandfathers, when they finally absorb that message, are beginning to say, "What about my grandkids, Mr. President? It seems like there's a big problem coming for them. What are you going to do about?" And now is the time to do something about it.

Fidel, I appreciate your tone; I appreciate your constructive work on this issue. Thanks for coming.

Our next guest is Russell Ybarra. He's *un Tejano*.

Russell Ybarra. A true *Tejano*.

The President. A true *Tejano*. Those are the best kind. [Laughter] A businessman—tell everybody what you do, Russell.

Mr. Ybarra. Well, first of all, yes, I was born and raised in the Lone Star State, so we're neighbors.

The President. Very good.

Mr. Ybarra. Again, my name is Russell Ybarra, and I tell people the first three words I learned in Spanish was *lechuga, tomate, y cebolla*, because that was the order we put them on the tacos at my family's restaurant when I was growing up. [Laughter] So anyway, I'm the president and CEO of Gringo's Mexican Kitchen. We operate six stores in the Houston area and one in San Antonio.

The President. Good. How are you doing? Making a little—

Mr. Ybarra. We're paying our taxes—on time. [Laughter]

The President. How about your ownership? You paying any of that?

Mr. Ybarra. A little bit.

The President. A little bit, that's good. Well, in other words, you're in business.

Mr. Ybarra. Exactly.

The President. That's good.

Mr. Ybarra. We have a duty.

[Mr. Ybarra made further remarks.]

Mr. Ybarra. Again, the 401(k) program in the food service industry is an exception, not the rule. And I thought, okay, we have a 401(k) program implemented, in place, and so we should just have everybody lining up to join the plan. Well, it didn't work out that way. We have very low participation and for good reason: Many of those that work for us are what you would consider low-wage earners.

The President. Can't afford the contribution.

Mr. Ybarra. Right. Exactly.

The President. Payroll tax.

Mr. Ybarra. Well, and that's just it. They're already paying 12.4 percent, basically, and have little or no disposable income

to set aside for future retirement. So this really impacts them dramatically.

[*Mr. Ybarra made further remarks.*]

The President. The best thing is to let them take their payroll taxes they're paying into the system and have a plan that allows their money to grow just like a 401(k) can. That's the best thing to do for low-income workers. That's why the Social Security reform is a vital reform for people at the lower end of the wage scale. It's really important.

Anyway, go ahead. Sorry to interrupt.

[*Mr. Ybarra made further remarks.*]

The President. Right. Remember, and this is important for people to hear, this is not the Government saying, "You have to do this." This is Government saying, "If you so choose to set aside some of your own money, you ought to be allowed to do so." It's optional. It basically says that Government is not going to dictate; Government just says, "Here's an option to trust people with their own money."

And a couple of points I want to make on Russell. One, the entrepreneurial spirit is strong in America, and we need to keep it that way. Congratulations on starting your own business.

Mr. Ybarra. Thank you.

The President. This is a chance—you volunteered to come up here, so anybody listening on C-SPAN in the Houston area, looking for a good restaurant, Russell—[*laughter*].

Mr. Ybarra. I'm currently also the Greater Houston Restaurant Association president.

The President. Oh, good, yes.

Mr. Ybarra. And I don't know if you know this or not, but the National Restaurant Association endorses your plan.

The President. Well, thanks. I appreciate it.

If you're making \$8 an hour over your life, and you start having a personal account when you're 21 years old, and at the age 63 you'll end up with a \$100,000 nest egg. That's if you stay at 8 all your life. In other words, that's how money grows. Wouldn't it be fantastic if a lot of folks who work for Russell's company were able to say, "Here's my money. Here's the nest egg I built up for my family."

The more ownership there is, the more assets passed on through a community, the better off the community is going to be. And the idea of owning something ought to be spread throughout all America. That's the great promise of America. That's what we're all about. You come here; you work hard; you realize your dreams; and you have a chance to build something for your family. How many people—you said your dad and mom came. I suspect there's a lot of first generation of Americans here because their parents came over here because of dreams and hopes.

By the way, speaking about restaurant employees, we've got to have a rational policy when it comes to immigrants coming to this country. I believe if there's—somebody is willing to employ somebody, and they can't find an American worker, and somebody is willing to do the job, we ought to make that connection a legal connection. People come here to work.

And this, by the way, will make our borders more secure. As opposed to people having to get in the back of 18-wheelers and sneaking across, you know, Texas borders or trying to walk across the desert to find work, if you've got a pass that says, "I'm a willing worker willing to work for a willing employer," it means they can just walk across normally and not have to try to sneak across. We'll be able to defeat a whole industry of document forgers and smugglers and *coyotes*, and it means we'll be able to uphold the dignity of persons around the world.

Anyway, it's called diverting off the topic.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. *Por nada.*

Mr. Ybarra. One last point, Mr. President, and I think this is a profound one. The underlying benefit of what you're proposing is a lot like what we did with our core beliefs, reinvesting in our associates and local community. I feel by doing this, the American productivity will increase dramatically.

The President. That's right. Well, basically, what he's just said is, "If you own something, you have a vital stake in the future." I mean, think about how great it's going to be when Jose and Jessica, as they have an investment account—they're young, new married; we're about to talk to them here.

But on a monthly basis, a quarterly basis, daily basis in some cases, you watch your assets grow. You open up a statement and say, "Here is what I own." That encourages people. If they're seeing something they own grow, that the Government can't take away from them, it encourages. And it will enhance productivity, and it will enhance the spirit in a lot of communities.

Good job. Thank you, Russell.

Mr. Ybarra. Thank you.

The President. It's great to see you.

Jose. Jose and Jessica, welcome. Thank you all. Newlyweds?

Jessica Gomez. No, 5 years.

The President. See, not newlyweds. [Laughter] I'm glad you're here. Give us a sense of who you are, what you're doing.

Jose Gomez. It's an honor to be here with you. My name is Jose Gomez. This is my lovely wife, Jessica. We've been married for almost 5 years. We have three beautiful kids. I currently attend DeVry University. I'm a full-time student.

The President. Yes? What are you studying?

Mr. Gomez. I'm studying network system administrator.

The President. Network systems administrator—would you like to try to describe what that means to the technologically illiterate? [Laughter]

Mr. Gomez. Basically, I will be taking care of a network in a business or something. But I, personally, want to own my own business.

The President. Want to own your own business? That's great.

Mr. Gomez. Yes, I want to start my own business later on, in the future.

The President. Do you have any idea what it's going to be yet, or are you just getting the skills necessary—

Mr. Gomez. Still getting the skills—

The President. —and the confidence necessary to launch?

Mr. Gomez. That's correct. That's what I'm currently—

The President. That's wonderful, though, isn't it? A guy sits up here with the President, "I want to own my own business." [Laughter] You may take a few tips from Russell.

Mr. Gomez. Currently I work in a job part-time, and they don't offer the 401(k).

And I work basically on a check-to-check basis.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Gomez. What I like about your plan is it will give me the opportunity to start saving and looking for the future, for our retirement, and if we choose to, pass it on to our kids for a nest egg.

The President. That's an interesting thought. You've got three little kids. Jessica, you want—

Mrs. Gomez. I have three beautiful children: Joslynn, who is 4; Jovanni, who is 2; and Isabella, who is one.

The President. Good, I'm looking forward to meeting them afterwards.

Mrs. Gomez. They're looking forward to it too. I worry more about their future, as any other mother does. I worry about that if the system continues the way it is, as you said before, by the time they work, they're going to be working twice as hard to take care of us when we retire.

The President. That's right.

Mrs. Gomez. So then when they—it's time for them to retire, they're going to just be so worn out, they're not going to—they're going to be broke, both emotionally and financially.

The President. Interesting thought, isn't it? Mom is sitting here, saying, "I've watched—listened to the data." You know, the system starts to go broke 2017; 2041, as Fidel said, there's nothing left. And she's got little kids. She's going to be paying into that system, and so are they. It's a troublesome thought for moms and dads to think about the system as it is, and it's got to be just as troublesome to think that the Government is not—hasn't done anything about it. Now is the time to do something about it.

You know, a lot—I talk to a lot of young folks like Jose and Jessica. There was an interesting survey once that somebody pointed up to me that said younger people think it's more likely they're going to see a UFO than get a Social Security check. [Laughter]

Well, if you feel that way and you watch that money come out of your check every month, it's a little discouraging, isn't it, to be paying into something that you're not sure is going to be around. Yes, so this is a young person issue. Older people, the grandmothers

and granddads, they don't have a thing to worry about. We're going to keep the promise. But it's the youngsters who are working hard, the moms and dads who are working hard, and the moms and dads who are worried about their children when they're coming up—that's what this issue is about, folks.

And it is amazing to me that we're living in a town where people oftentimes say, "Well, we can't cooperate with each other because of party politics." You heard a good Democrat sit up here and say he believes a reformed system will help his children and his community. That's the spirit that's needed. And we here in Washington, we need to think about people like Jessica and Jose, young kids, working hard, wants to start his business, got young kids, mom sitting up here saying, "I'm worried about it." She's really saying this, "You people in Government, how come you can't do nothing about it"—"or anything about it?" [Laughter]

I've learned to correct myself early before it gets on the record. [Laughter] Fortunately, the First Lady is not here. [Laughter] She'd probably have some joke about it. [Laughter]

Anyway, thank you all for coming. You got anything else you want to add? Well, I appreciate you letting us use you as an example. Looking forward to meeting the kids.

Mr. Gomez. Thank you. It's been an honor.

Mrs. Gomez. Thank you. It's very nice to be here.

The President. Well, thanks for coming. Our final guest is Elizabeth Fernandez. Elizabeth, welcome. Tell us what you do.

[Elizabeth Fernandez, member, Latino Coalition Social Security Task Force, made brief remarks.]

The President. Yes, that's an important concept—sorry to interrupt, but you're right. To run up the payroll-tax rate is going to hurt a lot of small businesses. One of the things we've got to always be mindful of in Washington is how do you make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong. And one way to make sure it's not strong is to overtax the small businesses. And so I appreciate you bringing the payroll taxes in; it's a significant burden on many small businesses. And it's really, really an important point. Thank you.

[Mrs. Fernandez made further remarks.]

Mrs. Fernandez. I don't know—do you have a financial literacy program, an education program set up to help—

The President. Yes, we do. That's—the FDIC, Treasury Department, SBA are very much involved with making sure people feel comfortable—I appreciate you bringing that up again, Elizabeth—people feel comfortable about what it means to invest. I recognize some people get nervous about it. You heard a Harvard man said he got—if he'd gone to Yale, he wouldn't have been so nervous, but nevertheless—[laughter]. But he said—no, but it's a new thing. You know, some worry about it, but people need to be assured that there are thousands of their fellow citizens who are comfortable now investing their own money. They hadn't been doing it in the past.

In other words, there's a new culture in America today. A lot of older Americans are saying, "Well, this is too difficult for some, perhaps." But there's a lot of younger Americans who are getting comfortable with managing their own money through a series of programs such as 401(k)s or IRAs, defined contribution plans.

And so—but you're right. We need to make sure people become more financially literate. And by the way, in terms of what you can invest in, you cannot take your money to the lottery. In other words, there's a conservative mix of bonds and stocks. And there are people to explain what it means.

And you get to decide. If you're a younger worker, you may decide to have a more—a greater mix of stocks and bonds. As you get older, you may decide to diversify. But you're constantly making decisions for your own money. The Government doesn't make those decisions for you. The Government makes options available for you. And then when it comes time to retire, you can go into a Treasury bond account, a perfectly safe investment—all of which, by the way, all those investment vehicles yield a better rate of return than you're getting on the Government's money.

I remember campaigning with John McCain on this issue, and he said that his Thrift Savings account—I think he said something like 7 percent rate of return on

the money, as money grew over time. And that's compared to 1.8 percent in the current Social Security system. And that 5.2 percent difference in interest makes a huge amount of money—makes a huge difference for you in the amount of money available over time.

So thanks for bringing it up. Elizabeth, anything else on your mind? You're awfully articulate. [Laughter]

Mrs. Fernandez. No, I just—thank you for the opportunity to be able to share our concerns, and thank you for your efforts in this area.

The President. Well, one of the things that Elizabeth said that triggered a thought here is that she said, "This is a complex issue. There's a lot of misinformation." And I understand that. There's a lot of moving parts, as they say, which says to me I better keep working on it. And I'm going to. I'm just getting started. This is an issue that—I'm going to spend a lot of time talking about this issue. I will spend as much time as necessary.

Congress has an obligation to act. I appreciate you saying I brought up an issue that I didn't need to bring up. I needed to bring it up. That's my job. The President's job is if—when he sees a problem, is to say, "Let's deal with it," not to shirk the duty, not to pass it on.

Fidel mentioned President Clinton—he started the process. I remember watching the townhall meeting you all had in Albuquerque in 1996, I think it was, and it was a fascinating discussion. Michael Boskin, who I think was on the commission then—I remember Mike, my buddy, talking about it. And I can't remember if you presented there or not.

Mr. Vargas. I was there.

The President. Did you present?

Mr. Vargas. No.

The President. Whew! [Laughter] I thought I might have dissed you there for a minute. [Laughter] But my only point is, is that that's what the President does. The President confronts problems, and now is the time to take this problem on.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for being here. Chairman Thomas would not be here if he didn't realize this was a very vital issue to people from all walks of life. And he wouldn't be here if he didn't believe that it was important to work together in a collaborative spirit

to get something done. And so thank you for letting us advance the issue. I appreciate you providing the forum. I'm honored our panelists came here. Thank you all for being here again.

May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:31 a.m. at the J.W. Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Hector V. Barreto, Administrator, Small Business Administration; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; and Michael J. Boskin, senior fellow, Hoover Institution, who participated in a national Social Security forum townhall meeting with President William J. Clinton in Albuquerque, NM, on July 27, 1998. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at the Cinco de Mayo Dinner

May 4, 2005

The President. *Bienvenidos.* Laura and I are honored to host so many distinguished Hispanic Americans and Mexican leaders here in the *Jardin de Rosas*. [Laughter] Welcome to the White House. The way I see it is, *mi casa es su casa*. [Laughter] I always look forward to Cinco de Mayo, especially because it gives me a chance to practice my Spanish. My only problem this year is I scheduled the dinner on *el cuatro de Mayo*. [Laughter] Next year I'm going to have to work on my math. [Laughter]

I want to thank you all for coming. I particularly want to thank the Attorney General of the United States, Alberto Gonzales, for joining us. The Secretary of Commerce, Carlos Gutierrez, and Edi. SBA Administrator Hector Barreto and his wife, Robin. Anna Cabral and Victor—Anna Cabral is the Treasurer of the United States. Welcome, Anna.

Eduardo Aguirre, who is the Director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Audience members. [Inaudible]

The President. These guys said they want to get to know you, Eduardo. [Laughter] By the way, Eduardo has been announced and,

upon Senate confirmation, will become the U.S. Ambassador to Spain.

Mi amigo, el juez del sur de Texas, Ricardo Hinojosa. The U.S. Surgeon General and his wife, Diane—Dr. Richard Carmona.

El Embajador de Mexico, welcome.

El Embajador de Estados Unidos a Mexico, Tony Garza, *y su esposa nueva*, Maria. Welcome.

I want to thank Congressman Henry Bonilla and Sheryl for joining us today—welcome, Congressman. Congressman Henry Cuellar *de Texas*, welcome.

Josefina Vazquez Mota, Mexico's Secretary for Social Development, welcome.

I want to thank Christian Castro, recording artist, who is going to perform tonight. I appreciate Jaci Velasquez; where's Jaci? Jaci is somewhere. There she is. Thanks. She's going to emcee. I want to thank Mariachi Sol de Mexico.

Cinco de Mayo commemorates a joyful moment in Mexican history. Tonight we're proud to celebrate that moment together. The United States and Mexico are united by ties of family, faith in God, and a deep love for freedom.

More than 25 million men and women of Mexican origin now make their homes in the United States. And they're making our Nation more vibrant and more hopeful every day. Mexican Americans have enriched the American experience with contributions to music and dancing and the arts. Latino entrepreneurs are starting their own businesses all across America and are creating jobs and trading in freedom with businesses across borders. More Hispanic Americans own their own homes today than ever before. And Mexican Americans are firmly committed to leaving no child behind in America.

Mexican Americans are also strengthening our country with their patriotism and service. Thousands of Mexican Americans have sacrificed in the Armed Services for our freedom. And more than 8,700 men and women born in Mexico now wear the uniform of the United States military. These dedicated men and women are making America safer, and they're making the world safer. And they're carrying on the courage and devotion that inspired an outnumbered band of Mexican

soldiers to victory in the Battle of Pueblo on the cinco de Mayo, 1862.

Here at the White House, the triumph of Cinco de Mayo was recognized by President Abraham Lincoln. And through the generations, Americans have continued to look on our neighbor to the south with fondness and deep respect. Tonight we look to the future with confidence in our warm and growing friendship.

And so now it is my pleasure to offer a toast: May God bless the people of Mexico and all the sons and daughters of Mexico who call America home. *Que Dios los bendiga*.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:01 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez and his wife, Edilia; Treasurer of the United States Anna Cabral and her husband, Victor; Ricardo H. Hinojosa, chair, U.S. Sentencing Commission; Ambassador to the U.S. Carlos Alberto de Icaza Gonzalez of Mexico; U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Antonio O. Garza, Jr., and his wife, Maria; Congressman Henry Bonilla and his wife, Sheryl; and entertainers Jaci Velasquez and Mariachi Sol de Mexico. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Interview With Lithuanian National Television

May 4, 2005

Lithuanian Support for Freedom in Ukraine

Q. Mr. President, you thanked President Valdas Adamkus for his efforts spreading the freedom in neighboring countries. What else could Lithuania do spreading the freedom in this region?

The President. Well, first, I did thank the President for his good work in the Ukraine. I thought it was a really great moment when the head of Lithuania got involved and encouraged the whole world to take notice of the freedom movement in the Ukraine. And by the way, that's a—the second election was a really important moment in the liberty movement. And I thanked him for that, genuinely so. And I want to say it again: I thank him for that.

Lithuania serves as a great example of what is possible. After years of being subjugated to harsh rule, the Lithuanians are now free, and they're showing they can grow the economy and that people have a chance to express themselves and there's a vibrant society when you're free. And it has been hard; the transition from communism to a free democracy is a hard transition. And it's very important for the Lithuanians and the Government to share that experience with others who will be going through the same thing. And so I am very proud of Lithuania, and I'm proud to call her friend.

Democracy in Belarus

Q. Mr. President, you showed a strong support for democracy cause in Belarus. And what is your administration planning to do, given the fact that Belarus Presidential election is planned next year?

The President. Well, first of all, we'll work with you, countries in the neighborhood, countries around—the free countries of the world, to insist there be free elections and make sure there's free elections. This is the last remaining dictatorship in Europe. And Condi Rice was in the neighborhood recently, as you know, Secretary of State Rice, and she brought up the subject. She met with people who are embracing the freedom movement in Belarus. I did as well when I was in Slovakia.

And so one of the roles that the United States can play is to speak clearly about the need for Belarus to be free and to work with people to insist that Belarus be free and, when the elections come, make sure the elections are free and have monitors and international observers. As you know, that made a big difference in the Ukraine, for example. No, it's—and I think—listen, I believe everybody wants to be free, and I believe if the world works together to achieve that, many people will be free.

Lithuania's Role in Afghanistan

Q. Lithuania is taking a concrete role in the reconstructing of Afghanistan.

The President. Yes.

Q. What kind of specific support do you ask—offer Lithuania?

The President. Well, as you know, we've got for our partners in Iraq and—we've got some solidarity funds. We want to work through the foreign aid money to help Lithuania in her efforts to help build a better world. Again, I applaud the President. I thank the people of Lithuania for the support in Afghanistan.

It's important that Afghanistan be free and peaceful; it will serve as an example for others. Again, I keep saying this to people, but you've just got to—the people of Lithuania have got to know how I feel. I believe everybody desires to be free, and I believe everybody deserves to be free. And societies will grow up around different customs and habits. I don't expect people to look like American form of government, but I do believe the world ought to work together to enable people to live free lives and then help countries, once they've become liberated from a tyrant, in the case of Afghanistan.

And that's what Lithuania is doing. And I'm confident the President is doing so because—for the same reason I am, because he understands that free societies, in the long run, will make the world peaceful. And that's what we want for our children and our grandchildren; we want there to be peace.

President's Upcoming Meeting With Russian President Putin

Q. You're going to meet Mr. Putin. Will you repeat your words to him that the Second World War has brought the Soviet occupation to the Baltic States?

The President. Yes, of course I'll remind him of that. I told him in Slovakia that I felt it was important for him to understand that my friends the leaders of the Baltics are upset. In other words, they don't view the end of World War II as a great moment of celebration, and there's a reason why. He took it in. Your President has decided not to go to Moscow. I respect him for that decision. Each leader in the Baltics has to make the decision they're comfortable with. And it was a very difficult period, and so this is a hard decision. And I respect the decisions of the three leaders.

But I did make it clear to President Putin that there is great angst—people don't view this as a liberating moment—and hopefully

that he will work with the Baltics in a cooperative way, because it really is in Russia's interest to have free countries and democracies on her border. The more democracies on the border of a country, the more peaceful the country will be.

And so this is a bittersweet moment for a lot of people in America who are from the Baltics—a lot of Lithuanian Americans here, by the way—who, on the one hand, are really happy the United States defeated nazism, on the other hand, saw their homeland taken over by a repressive communist regime.

President's Previous Visit to Lithuania

Q. Mr. President, thank you. It was a pleasure.

The President. Great. And listen, I want to say one other thing: I want to thank the people of Lithuania for the warm reception. Laura and I received the last time we were there. It was one of the great visits of my Presidency. I remember sitting in the town—standing in the town square, and it was very interesting, seeing a lot of older Lithuanians with tears in their eyes. I guess they never thought they'd see the day where the American President came. It touched my heart a lot. And then I saw a lot of young Lithuanians wondering what the heck the American President was all about—you know, they kind of—so it was a very touching visit.

Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:14 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast and was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 5. In his remarks, the President referred to President Valdas Adamkus of Lithuania; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Interview With Estonian Television

May 4, 2005

60th Anniversary of the End of World War II in Europe

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for joining our viewers. Mr. President, do you understand and accept the reasons and explanations that two Baltic Presidents are not attending the celebrations in Moscow, 9th May?

The President. Yes, absolutely. First of all, I can understand the decision by your President and the President of Lithuania, as well as the President of Latvia. These are difficult decisions because—and they reflect the difficult times. And I honor those decisions. But I understand.

There's a lot of Americans who came—whose families were in the Baltics. And this is a bittersweet moment for them when you think about it. On the one hand, our country helped defeat fascism, and upon the defeat of fascism, they saw their homelands be taken over by a repressive ideology. And so I fully understand and, matter of fact, understood it to the point where I brought it up to President Putin when I saw him in Slovakia and just said, "You've got to understand this is going to create some sensitivities among our friends, among America's friends, Estonia and Lithuania and Latvia."

Democracy in the Baltic States

Q. It's quite strange situation now. The war is over for 60 years, and it's not still over. Whose fault is it? Whose represented—

The President. No, I appreciate that. Look, it's—I think it's time to move beyond fault and focus on the future. Now, that's easy for me to say because I didn't have any family members that were repressed or families divided. I didn't have to live under the yoke of communism. But I do believe that time will help heal the wounds.

And listen, the Baltics are doing great. Their economies are growing. They're getting stronger. Freedom is working. People are able to express themselves in the public square. Independent media can come and interview the President in the White House. I mean, it is a—these are exciting times. But I readily understand why it takes time to heal the wounds of the past.

Democracy in Russia

Q. Democracy and the human rights situation in Russia is quite worrying. Are you going to discuss this item during your visit to Moscow?

The President. Oh, of course. I have—first of all, I've got a relationship with President Putin that enables me to be able to have a frank discussion. He gave an interesting

speech the other day. The press tend to focus on a comment about the Soviet times, and of course, that obviously riled emotions in the Baltics. I understand that. But he also went on to talk about democracy. I thought it was interesting that he spent a lot of time on his big speech to the nation on democracy. I believe Russia's interest lie to her west. I believe that Russia, by embracing the values that we share, will be able to deal with the many problems that she has. Russia has got enormous problems.

And so, yes, of course, I'll talk to President Putin about that. And I will do so in a cooperative way, in a cooperative spirit. This is not an antagonistic relationship. And I don't think you want the relationship to be antagonistic. After all, Russia is your neighbor. I think you would want your friend the United States to be in a position where I can go in and have a constructive, direct dialog. And I think one people—one thing people have learned about me is I'm a pretty direct person. I say what's on my mind; I try to do so diplomatically. But yes, I will. And I do so for the interests of the United States and for our friends and for the world.

War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, I can't let you go from here without a question of terrorism.

The President. Sure.

Q. Latest surveys show that the numbers of terrorism are increasing, not decreasing.

The President. Yes.

Q. Why is that?

The President. Well—

Q. You have made a lot of efforts.

The President. Yes, that's why. If we weren't trying to find the enemy and bring them to justice, the world would look relatively peaceful. But we're on the offense. And so when you engage the enemy, when you try to bring them to justice, they don't like to be brought to justice.

I've always told the American people here, "It's best to find them where they try to hide so that we don't have to deal with them here at home." And so part of the reasons why there's—activity is up is because we're chasing them down. As a matter of fact, today a big news report came out that I would say one of the top Al Qaida leaders, a person

very close to Usama bin Laden, was brought to justice in Pakistan by the Pak Government, with our help, but nevertheless, the Pak Government did the hard work—Abu Faraj al-Libbi. That's a very important part of defeating the Al Qaida.

But no, we'll stay on the offense. And we'll be relentless and tireless in doing so. The best way to defeat terrorism in the long run, though, is by spreading freedom, is by giving people a chance to live in a free society.

Q. How long it takes to curb, finally?

The President. Yes, that's a good question. However long—it takes as long as necessary. I just don't know. I don't have a—I can't give you a timetable. But whatever it takes, so long as I'm the President and there's a threat to the United States of America and to our people—you see, a lot of people in Europe, for them, September the 11th was a date, a passing moment. No question they expressed deep sympathy, for which the United States is grateful. But for us, it was a change of attitude. It was a change of foreign policy. And I told the people when I ran for office the second time, I said, "If you put me in office, every day I'm in office, I'll be relentless in chasing down the enemy." And so, for however long it takes.

It takes a while for freedom to take hold. I know that. Look at Iraq. Iraq is going from a tyranny to a free society, and it's not easy. But they're getting there. This country is beginning to—it's getting on its feet. The security forces are beginning to work better. The terrorists are more desperate. But that free society will be an important part of sending a message to others. And free societies are peaceful societies. And that's the great example of Estonia, for which the United States is grateful, and we're proud to call you friend.

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. My honor.

Q. Very much, indeed.

The President. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:23 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast and was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 5. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia; President Valdas Adamkus of Lithuania; President Arnold Ruutel of Estonia; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; Usama bin

Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Abu Faraj al-Libbi, senior Al Qaida associate arrested in Pakistan on April 30.

Remarks on the National Day of Prayer

May 5, 2005

The President. Good morning, and welcome to the White House. Laura and I are honored to join you on this important occasion.

I want to thank Shirley Dobson, the chairman of the National Day of Prayer. Thank you for organizing this event, and thank you for your wonderful comments. I'm glad to see you brought your husband, Jim, with you. *[Laughter]* It's good to have Vonette Bright with us; welcome. I appreciate my fellow Texan, Max Lucado, for his wonderful prayer. Thank you very much; welcome. I'm glad you and Denalyn are with us. Rabbi, thank you for your reading of the psalm. It's good to have your family here; welcome. I appreciate Father Charles Pope, pastor of St. Thomas More Catholic Church, here in DC. Kind of sounded more like a Baptist preacher to me. *[Laughter]*

Laura and I are proud Methodists, and we're pleased to be here with Bishop Peter Weaver, who is the president of the Council of Methodist Bishops, who will deliver the closing prayer. Thank you.

It's such an honor to be here with the St. Olaf Choir led by Anton Armstrong. You've got such beautiful music. Thank you for sharing with us. I'm sure they're having a prayerful moment right now—*[laughter]*—praying that I hurry up and finish because they have been standing for quite a while. *[Laughter]*

The National Day of Prayer is an annual event established in 1952 by an Act of the United States Congress. Yet, this day is part of a broader tradition that reaches back to the beginnings of America. From the landing of the pilgrims at Plymouth Rock to the launch of the American Revolution, the men and women who founded this Nation in freedom relied on prayer to protect and preserve it.

Today, prayer continues to play an important part in the personal lives of many Americans. Every day, millions of us turn to the

Almighty in reverence and humility. Every day, our churches and synagogues and mosques and temples are filled with men and women who pray to our Maker. And almost every day, I am given a special reminder of this great generosity of spirit when someone comes up and says, "Mr. President, I'm praying for you."

Prayer has been an important part of American public life as well. Many of our forefathers came to these shores seeking the freedom to worship. The first Continental Congress began by asking the Almighty for the wisdom that would enable them to settle things on the best and surest foundation. And when our Founders provided that sure foundation in the Declaration of Independence, they declared it a self-evident truth that our right to liberty comes from God.

And so we pray as a nation for three main reasons. We pray to give thanks for our freedom. Freedom is our birthright because the Creator wrote it into our common human nature. No Government can ever take a gift from God away. And in our great country, among the freedoms we celebrate is the freedom to pray as you wish or not at all. And when we offer thanks to our Creator for the gift of freedom, we acknowledge that it was meant for all men and women and for all times.

Second, we pray for help in defending the gift of freedom from those who seek to destroy it. Washington prayed at Valley Forge. Franklin Roosevelt sent American troops off to liberate a continent with his D-day prayer. Today, we pray for the troops who are defending our freedom against determined enemies around the globe. We seek God's blessing for the families they have left behind, and we commit to Heaven's care those brave men and women he has called home.

Audience members. Amen.

The President. Finally, we pray to acknowledge our dependence on the Almighty. Prayerful people understand the limits of human strength. We recognize that our plans are not always God's plans. Yet, we know that a God who created us for freedom is not indifferent to injustice or cruelty or evil. So we ask that our hearts may be aligned with His and that we may be given the strength to do what is right and help those in need.

We who ask for God's help for ourselves have a particular obligation to care for the least of our brothers and sisters within our midst.

During the funeral for Abraham Lincoln, Bishop Matthew Simpson relayed a story about a minister who told our 16th President that he hoped the Lord was on his side. Lincoln wisely replied that he was more concerned that he was on the side of the Lord, because the Lord was always on the side of right.

Freedom is a divine gift that carries with it a tremendous human responsibility. The National Day of Prayer is a day that we ask that our Nation, our leaders, and our people use the freedom we have been given wisely. And so we pray as Americans have always prayed, with confidence in God's purpose, with hope for the future, and with the humility to ask God's help to do what is right.

Thank you for coming. May God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:26 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vonette Bright, former chairman, National Day of Prayer Task Force; Max Lucado, 2005 honorary chairman, National Day of Prayer, and his wife, Denalyn; and Rabbi Kenneth Auman, president, Rabbinical Council of America.

Interview With Dutch TV NOS

May 5, 2005

President's Upcoming Visit to the Netherlands

Q. Mr. President, thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to talk to you. You're going to Europe, commemorating 60 years of liberation in Europe. You could have gone to many countries. Why did you choose to go to Holland?

The President. First of all, Holland was a stalwart, and the people of Holland were brave and courageous when it came to resisting tyranny. And a lot of people paid a heavy price for standing for freedom in the face of fascism. As well many Americans lost their lives on Dutch soil, and it's an opportunity to praise those who fought, honor those who died, and remind people that there's more work to be done to make the world more free.

Democracy in the Middle East/War on Terror

Q. About that, more work to be done, do you see any similarities about what happened 60 years ago, the Americans, among others, liberating Europe, and what you are doing now, in the Middle East, for example?

The President. Well, it's a different situation, but there is evil in the world. There's always been evil. I believe that those who kill in the name of a great religion are evil people; people who are willing to destroy innocent life or bury people in mass graves or starve people to death are evil. And I think the free world must confront evil. The last choice is to use the military. On the other hand, sometimes you have to.

And as you know, I made a difficult decision. Some in Europe didn't agree. Some in Holland didn't agree, and I can understand that. But now we have an obligation and a duty, it seems like to me, to work together to help others become free. Freedom is universal—freedom shouldn't be just—people shouldn't view freedom as only the purview of Americans or the Dutch or Europeans. Everybody deserves to be free.

President's Leadership and Decisionmaking

Q. But the interesting thing is, Mr. President, that we all agree, also in Europe, about your goals, democracy, freedom—

The President. Sure.

Q. —safety in the world. Does it frustrate you sometimes that—for example, in the Netherlands they did a poll before you are coming now that a vast part of the population does not agree with the way you're handling world affairs, for example.

The President. Well, you know—

Q. Is it frustrating?

The President. No, it doesn't. I mean, I—

Q. It must be a little, though.

The President. No, it doesn't; it doesn't frustrate me. I make decisions on what I think is right. That's what leaders do. The other day in a press conference, I was asked about polls here in America. I said, "A leader who tries to lead based upon polls is like a dog chasing his tail." That's not how you lead.

No, I feel comfortable with the decisions I've made.

Q. Is it maybe, then, a communication problem?

The President. I don't know. I don't follow the Dutch media, don't know what's being said in Holland.

Abu Ghraib/Cooperation in Iraq

Q. Well, when people are being asked about you or America, they admire, again, your goals, but when you talk about, for example, about the war on terror and you see freedom and democracy, the Dutch see that as well, but they also see, for example, prisoner abuse in Abu Ghraib prison or Guantanamo Bay, where prisoners are being held without charge, or the Americans who do not want their soldiers in The Hague for the tribunal, to be accountable.

The President. Well, we have different—

Q. So they see that problem.

The President. Well, first of all, all Americans, including me, reject Abu Ghraib. That was an aberration. That's not what America stands for. And if people are concerned about the tactics, I understand that, but the goal is peace. And now is the time to work together to achieve peace.

Q. How do you want to do that? What do you want to tell the Dutch people?

The President. Let me finish. But you asked me, do I worry about polls? I don't; that's not what leaders do. Leaders who sit around and read polls all the time are leaders that don't lead.

Q. But the Dutch people are interested in—

The President. Let me finish, please. And I have an obligation to lead. And we're making progress. You saw 8½ million people voted in Iraq. They defied the terrorists. They defied the suicide bombers, because they desire to be free. And now we have an obligation to work to help that country develop into a democracy, because the lesson of Europe, of working together as democracies, has yielded peace.

You know, 60 years ago, people would sit around and wonder whether or not peace was possible. And as a result of the good work of many in Holland and around Europe and

the United States working collaborative, the world is a peaceful place. And that's what we have a chance to do today. And that's why I thank the Dutch Government for helping train Iraqis, for example, helping Iraq become stable. And it's in our long-term interest that that happen.

Democracy in the Netherlands/Culture of Life

Q. One last question about something completely different.

The President. Sure.

Q. You're the President in the United States known for coming up for moral values, moral issues, also—Terri Schiavo, for example. The Dutch Government is completely on the other side of the spectrum when it comes to abortion or euthanasia, gay marriages, drugs even. Politicians from your party weren't even—Americans don't go—don't want to go to the direction of Holland. Do you share that concern?

The President. No, I—first of all, Holland is a free country. It's a country where the people get to decide the policy. The Government just reflects the will of the people. That's what democracies are all about. And that's what—that's why we should continue to work for common interest to support government of the people, not government that dictates to people. And so if that's what the people of Holland want, that's what the Government should reflect.

Q. No special message from the President of America?

The President. No. I mean, people are allowed to make—I have a different view, and many Americans have a different view. I've always worked to promote a culture of life. I think that a civil society is one that protects the most vulnerable among us.

But you asked me whether or not I have a message for the people of Holland. The message is: Keep free, be free, support democracy and liberty, not only within your country but continue to work with free nations to help people be free around the world, and the world will be a more peaceful place.

Europe-U.S. Relations/International Criminal Court

Q. One final question, if I may, please.

The President. Sure, sure.

Q. I think maybe Europeans feel that you're also their President, but they do not get to vote for you. How do you feel that responsibility?

The President. I really—I appreciate that. I'm perplexed by that attitude, because Europeans have got very good leaders.

Q. But your decisions influence our lives.

The President. Well, sometimes they do, and sometimes European decisions influence American lives. But the best way to influence the world is to work together in a collaborative spirit. And I appreciate the leadership in the Netherlands. I get along very well with the leadership, and I am—my pledge is to continue to work as closely as we possibly can.

Listen, there's going to be differences of opinion. You mentioned the International Criminal Court. We're not going to join it, and there's a reason why we're not going to join it: We don't want our soldiers being brought up in front of unelected judges. But that doesn't mean that we're not going to hold people to account, which we're doing now in America. And nor does it mean that even though we may disagree on the Court, that we can't work for other big goals in the world.

And so, again, on my second trip to Europe since I've been the President, I'm going to continue to emphasize my desire to work with others to achieve peace.

Q. Okay, Mr. President.

The President. Welcome.

Q. Thank you again.

The President. Yes. Thanks for coming.

Q. And enjoy your stay in the Netherlands.

The President. I'm looking forward to it.

Interview With Foreign Print Journalists

May 5, 2005

The President. I'm looking forward to this trip, second trip to Europe since my second Inauguration, second time to the Baltics since I've been President. I've been to Russia a lot of times, first time to Georgia in my life, and first time to the Netherlands in my life. And I'm looking forward to the experience.

I'm going to celebrate with others the end of World War II. It's a chance to give thanks to those who sacrificed. It is a moment to understand that with each generation comes responsibilities to work to achieve peace. It will be a solemn occasion in the graveyard, but one in which I will be able to express our appreciation to the Dutch for her friendship and remind the world that we still have great duties. And one of the greatest duties of all is to spread freedom to achieve the peace.

I look forward to going to the Baltics again. When the Baltics first got into NATO, I remember commenting to somebody sitting close to me, I said, "This is going to be a fantastic addition to NATO, because countries that have been—that really appreciate freedom are now amidst a great Alliance, reinvigorating the concept of why we exist in the first place, to defend freedom."

And I look forward to seeing the leaders from the free countries. I look forward to my speech in Latvia, which talks about democracy and the spread of democracy. But also with democracy has got certain obligations, rule of law, transparency, and the protection of minority rights—protection of minorities, upholding minority rights.

I'm looking forward to going to Russia. I'll have a private dinner with President Putin. It will be a part of an ongoing dialog I have with him as we learn to continue to respect each other and have a frank dialog about our countries' ambitions, decisionmaking.

When you get close to a leader, as I have done with a lot of leaders around the world,

NOTE: The interview was taped at 9:48 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast.

it enables one to be able to really understand, learn to understand how a person makes decisions and why a person makes decisions, the philosophy on which a person makes decisions, the justification for decisions. And I look forward to continuing that dialog with President Putin. He'll want to know why I'm making decisions, and I want to know why he's making decisions.

And then we'll, of course, talk about areas of common concern. Russia is playing a very important role around the world, starting with Iran, for example. Russia is playing a very constructive role in helping to bring peace. Russia is a part of the Quartet. As we all work to achieve peace in the Middle East, Russia has an important role to play. Vladimir is going to want to know from me what's happening in Iraq, from my perspective, and I'll be glad to share it with him. And we'll, of course, discuss North Korea. After all, Russia and the United States are part of the six-party talks.

And then I'll be going to Georgia. I was asked why I picked Georgia, and I can remember the enthusiasm President Saakashvili had when he invited me to come. It was contagious. In other words, a verbal invitation, it was just incredibly contagious. He is enthusiastic about your country, and I look forward to going and witnessing the enthusiasm of a new democracy firsthand.

And so it's a chance to go back to Europe and talk about common values, common goals, and the need for us to continue to work together.

And with that, we'll start. Is there any order, or should we just start—

Q. Yes, there is.

The President. You're the first guy?

Q. I'm from Latvia, so we—

The President. We'll just go like this; we'll be even more orderly than that. *[Laughter]* Kaarel.

Democracy in Belarus

Q. Okay. Sir, about 9th of May in Moscow, how you would feel in standing in the wrong line with, let's say, Aleksandr Lukashenko and General Jaruzelski and maybe—

The President. Well, I think those people know how I feel about tyrants and dictatorship; I've made my position very clear. And

I view this as a celebration to end tyranny. Although, I fully recognize the Baltics ended up with a form of government they weren't happy with. It's a moment to remind people that when the world works together, we can end tyranny. And it will be an interesting observation to remind people tyrants still exist.

I look forward to Belarus working with the Baltics and other countries to insist that democracy prevail there. As you know, Condi Rice came to your neighborhood and spoke very clearly about the need for democracy to exist. When I was in Slovakia, I met with freedom fighters, freedom lovers from different countries, and a group were there from Belarus. I reminded them that we believe you should be free, and there is ways to achieve that, and we can work together to achieve that. But seeing these people will just redouble my efforts, if they're there.

Yes, sir.

President's Upcoming Visit to Latvia

Q. Mr. President, as you've said, this will be the second visit by a President of the United States to Latvia since we regained our independence.

The President. To the Baltics. Oh, you're saying President—I beg your pardon, yes. Yes.

Q. Second to Latvia.

The President. Yes, okay.

Q. So why did you decide to go to Latvia? And how would you characterize the relations between our countries, both historically and at present?

The President. Historically, no question the United States never recognized the form of government imposed upon Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. As a matter of fact, you might recall the history of the Embassies that were here, that were treated as independent Embassies with the flags of the free countries flying above those Embassies. In other words, we never recognized what took place. That's because we believed in your freedom.

And that hasn't changed. I was proud to represent my country the day the three Baltic countries entered NATO. I remember the leaders walking in. It was a very profound moment. And I remember going to Lithuania to give a speech in the town square there,

heralding the mission into NATO and reminding people that that meant that the United States and other nations would make sure that the sovereignty of the three nations remained.

Our relations are good, very good, with Latvia. And as I'm sure the press has reported—and accurately so—I'm fond of the President. I think she is a remarkable woman. She is courageous. She is forthright. She speaks her mind, which I appreciate. Some people accuse me of speaking my mind, and I do. And I appreciate her speaking hers, because I think it's the way you deal with people respectfully. You understand there is difference of opinion, but I appreciate somebody who shares—has an openness in the relationship, a frank relationship. And that's our relationship, and I'm really looking forward—I appreciate the invitation, and I'm looking forward to going.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Stasys—is that how you pronounce it?

Q. Stasys, yes. Stasys.

The President. Stasys?

Q. Yes.

The President. What does Stasys mean in English?

Q. Just a name. [Laughter]

The President. Stasys means Stasys.

Q. Yes.

The President. You're the first person I've met named Stasys.

Q. Not the first person I've met who didn't like joke, yes. [Laughter]

The President. How about George W.?

Lithuania's Role in Afghanistan

Q. First one. [Laughter] Okay.

Mr. President, one of the greatest challenges for Lithuania as a member of NATO—a NATO member for a year now, it's taking a lead in restoration of one of Afghanistan's province. Isn't this mission too hard for this small country? And will the United States help us politically, technically, and financially?

The President. Yes to the latter, to the extent that Congress is willing to appropriate money. We make requests for reimbursements to allies in various theaters. A country would not have—first of all, you're a free

country, and you make decisions based upon what you think your country can handle. And the fact that Lithuania has agreed to lead one of the reconstruction teams I think is a statement of progress and a statement of principle; progress in that government feels like it's plenty capable of handling the responsibility; statement of principle that free countries have an obligation to work together to promote freedom for the good of mankind.

And after all, the lesson of Europe—60 years ago, leaders were sitting around, I don't think they were spending a lot of time wondering whether or not peace—Europe could be whole, free, and at peace. Imagine the trauma. But there were visionaries, visionaries in Europe, visionaries around in America and around the world that said, "If we work for freedom, we'll leave the world a more peaceful place."

And Europe is a much-changed place. Sixty years is a long time for some, but in the scheme of things, it's not that long. And yet, 60 years after trauma and sacrifice that we'll be honoring in a graveyard in Holland, Europe is at peace, remarkably at peace. And times are changing. And Lithuania and other countries recognize that by working together today in places like Afghanistan and Iraq, we'll be able to look back at free societies and say, "Those free societies left behind a more peaceful world."

And so I'm proud of your country and proud of the decisions made. And of course, there will be help. The idea of putting out a country without the support is just not part of the coalition strategy.

Yes, ma'am.

Democracy in Georgia

Q. Mr. President, your visit to Georgia is really a historical moment for all Georgians, and I'm sure a lot of people will meet you at Freedom Square. And these people think that your visit shows America's growing interest and support—supports Georgia in its pursuit of democracy. How does the America's rising interest in this country, and what must be done by the Georgian Government, itself, to make this interest and support sustainable?

The President. Great question. American interest was obviously piqued with the success of the Rose Revolution. Interestingly enough, the Rose Revolution led to other revolutions—the Orange Revolution. The desire for people to be free is universal, and sometimes the decision by people to take peaceful actions to insist upon democracy sparks interest elsewhere, kind of lights a wildfire.

And so that's why—that's what first got the attention of the American people about what took place in Georgia. Listen, Americans love freedom. It's something that is part of our nature. And we recognize that people are going to develop government that matches their cultures and their histories, but we love the idea of people being free. And the Rose Revolution captured our imaginations and our appreciation.

The Government of Georgia is making very difficult but important decisions, routing out corruption, for example, insisting upon rule of law and transparency, all of which will help pique American interest when it comes for investment. Nobody wants to invest in a society in which you don't get a fair shake in the courts or the rules change or you have to be corrupt in order to make your investment worthwhile.

So the Russian—I mean, the Georgian Government is making very good decisions about basic fundamental pillars of democracy, which serve as a great example for people around the world. Listen, it's hard to go from a society in which you've had a government imposed on you to a free society. It's just difficult. It's hard to go from a tyranny to liberty. And yet, we live in a world where everybody expects it to happen overnight. And yet, the Georgian example shows that with time, diligence by a government, that positive foundations can be laid.

And so I will praise those foundations. Again, I'll thank the Georgian people as well for not only setting an example but also willing to lend troops, for example, in Iraq, on that theory—which I believe is true, as does the Georgian leadership—that freedom will equal peace. That's what we want.

I'm really looking forward to the experience. I'm looking forward to giving a speech in Freedom Square. As a matter of fact, I'm

getting ready to go over the speech here this morning. I want to make sure that when I say something, it's got meaning. And it's going to be an exciting moment for me. I thank the people of Georgia for inviting me—

Q. For many Georgians as well. Everybody is very excited.

The President. It's going to be great.

Yes, sir.

Aftermath of September 11/War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, a few months ago you mentioned in Brussels the violence in the Netherlands. I presume you referred then to the murder on moviemaker van Gogh.

The President. I did.

Q. And that murder reminded the Dutch that they have a common interest with you—with the U.S. in combating terrorism. But some critics argue that tensions in Dutch society and in the world between Muslims and non-Muslims were not only a result of 9/11 but also a result of the way you responded to 9/11, especially with the Iraq war. What is your answer to those critics?

The President. My comment was—I also heard there was some criticism about the comment that maybe I was being critical of Dutch society. Of course, I wasn't. What I was saying was—and I thank you for your question, because your question recognized the gist of my comment. My comment was, "Evil can strike anywhere." Killing innocent people is an evil act. And therefore, we must work together to share information, to cut off money, to prevent people from killing innocent people in order to achieve a political gain. And that's really what I was referring to. And I was referring to the horror of the van Gogh murder.

I have a duty to protect our country, and I took necessary actions to do so. I don't want to—I can spend a lot of time, if you like, going through the desire to go through the United Nations process and getting the resolution. The world spoke with one voice. I tried every diplomatic means necessary.

But I don't buy into the theory that taking actions to defend yourself causes extremists to murder people. I think that's part of their

ideology. I think it's part of their methodologies. As a matter of fact, this notion about kind of tolerating the world as it is and hope for the best didn't work. It led to an attack on our country where 3,000 people died.

Now, look, I fully understand, in Europe that was a traumatic—a dramatic moment, but it was a passing moment. For us, it was a change of philosophy and a change of attitude, and that's been part of the issue with Europe. And I will continue to reach out to explain that our national consciousness was affected deeply by that attack. That's why yesterday, when we—we've been working with the Paks, the Paks made the arrest of this guy, Abu Faraj al-Libbi, was a big deal for us because he was a plotter. But my message to Europe, and to the Dutch in particular on this one example, was that we have a lot of work to do.

The message also is, though, that in order to defeat anger, the sentiments that cause people to want to join a extremist movement that's willing to kill innocent life and a movement which has killed innocent life all over the world, is to spread freedom. But there's no freer country in Europe than the Netherlands. And I appreciate that.

Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, you are going to Moscow mainly to participate in the celebration of the—[inaudible]. You will say on this occasion how you like to send a positive message to Russian people, President Putin back in Moscow, so you are going to meet with the leaders of the civil society. And many of these leaders are concerned about the dangerous tendencies in Russia, like a slackening of democracy and the—[inaudible]—of horror by gunmen. Do you like to discuss this issue along with your positive public message?

The President. Well, no, that's right. Listen, I think the fact that I'm in a country where I'm allowed to meet with people from civil society is a good signal. I mean, there is a civil society, and they're allowed to speak to the American President about concerns. I have no idea what they're going to say. I'm looking forward to it. I think it's good. And I will assure them that my message that I will give in Latvia, speaking to the world,

same message I give here at home, is the message I continue profess, and that is minorities have rights in a democracy.

And listen, believe me, our country wasn't always perfect, because it couldn't be said that minorities always had rights in America. We enslaved people for a hundred years in our country. And my point in saying that is that the path to an ideal democracy is hard. And I recognize it's hard. But nevertheless, it's a path we ought to stay on for the good of our respective peoples.

And again, I repeat to you—and this is an important thing for people to understand—that a respectful relationship with a leader of a great country like Russia is important to maintain. And I have a respectful relationship. I'm able to express concerns and ask questions and get responses in a civil way. And I think that's very important to make sure our relations are good. And we don't always agree with each other. Vladimir didn't agree with Iraq. A lot of people didn't agree with Iraq. But nevertheless, I was in a position where I was able to explain it to him why I made the decision I made.

But there are a lot of problems in which we have common ground and need to work together. And I cited some of them earlier in my opening comments. And I meant them. And so I'm—I view our relationship as a crucial relationship for peace. And I believe Russia's interest lay west. And we'll continue to work with President Putin to convince him to pursue those interests. I will also remind him that decisions he makes affects the capacity to attract foreign capital. I will also thank him for the speech he gave. The kernel of the speech he gave to the state of—I'm not sure what you call it, the state of the people or state of the union or address to the people or—we call it State of the Union, but whatever you call it in Russia—was that he spent a lot of time on democracy and institutions related to democracy. I read the speech, and I'll talk to him about that.

We've got time for one more round. If you can make your questions short, I'll make my answers shorter.

Freedom and Democracy

Q. Mr. President, you're often speaking about freedom and about the march to freedom and about—freedom. How do you define freedom?

The President. Freedom, democracy?

Q. Freedom as such.

The President. Well, I view freedom as where government doesn't dictate. Government is responsive to the needs of people. I was asked by a Dutch journalist earlier, was I concerned about some of the social decisions the Dutch Government made. And I said, "No, the Government reflects the will of the people." That's what freedom—government is of the people. We say "of the people, by the people, and for the people." And a free society is one if the people don't like what is going on, they can get new leaders. And my country had a chance to do so. Fortunately, they chose not to. But nevertheless—[laughter]—but that's free society, society responsive to people.

Again, I'll repeat to you, my vision of free governments does not reflect—I recognize they're not going to reflect what America looks like. We're different. But so is each country here different. And the governments will reflect the taste, the culture, the history of the country. But all democracies will reflect the will of the people, and that's how I define it.

Aivars.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Did I get it right?

Q. It was correct.

The President. Thank you. What does Aivars mean in English?

Q. Well, it's from—it comes from the Anglo-Saxon word "aivar," meaning the god, the lord, the housekeeper.

The President. Really?

Q. Yes. [Laughter] So may I ask a question now?

The President. Yes, sir. [Laughter] These guys—I sometimes try to throw them off balance by, "I'm asking the questions." Anyway, go ahead. Sorry.

Russia-Baltic States Relations

Q. That's fine. You've said that in Moscow you will try to understand why a person makes—what and how a person makes deci-

sions. I would like to ask, when you meet with President Putin in Moscow, what will you say to him about Russia's relations with the Baltic States?

The President. Well, I've already had this discussion with him. I will remind him that democracies on Russia's border are very positive. See, a democracy reflects the will of the people, and people don't like war. They don't like conflict. They want to live in—a chance to raise their families in a peaceful environment. And it is a constructive, positive development when a country has got democracies on her border. We know firsthand in America because we've got democracies on our border. And we've got issues with Canada and Mexico, of course, but they're resolved peacefully because we're democracies. And that's what I'll remind President Putin.

Stasys.

Visa Policy

Q. Correct. [Laughter] Mr. President, when Baltic State people can expect a visa-free regime with the United States, please?

The President. Yes. Thank you for bringing that up. As you know, the visa policy that affects many of the Eastern European countries and Baltic countries was established a while ago, during a different era, and it is different from parts of Western Europe. And we're now in the process of reevaluating our visa policy, country by country, and want to work with a way forward with each country to come up with a visa policy that affects the people fairly.

This is an issue, obviously, in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia; every country in Eastern Europe, as well as the Baltics, has the same concern. And there is a way forward, by the way. And I'm confident your Governments are working on the way forward.

Yes, ma'am.

Georgia-Russia Relations

Q. Unresolved conflict in Georgia remain main basis for uncertainty in the whole region. So this conflict hinders our ability to achieve long-term stability and security. [Inaudible]—Russia continues to support separatist leader in breakaway territory of Georgia. In its turn, the best effort of multilateral

entities, such as U.N. and the OSC, is their ability to make stability in the region, so has not been so successful so far. What concrete, more aggressive steps and initiatives can your administration take to help Georgian Government achieve more tangible results in settling this conflict?

The President. As to the bases, as I understand it, the Government of Russia has made a statement that they'll be out of the bases. And this is obviously an issue that needs to be resolved between Georgia and Russia. I spoke to the President the other day, who asked me to bring this up when I saw President Putin. I guess I'm now bringing it up via the press. But anyway, I will, as well as the territorial issue that President Saakashvili has put a way forward. Hopefully, the Russian Government will see that as a peaceful way to resolve the issue and work with the leader in the territory there to come to the table and deal with it peacefully.

The key thing is, is that all parties agree to deal with this issue peacefully—these issues peacefully. It's—seems that's fair to me. I'll be able to get a better gauge when I sit down and actually speak to people about it. But this is an issue—and it's a very important issue that the Georgian Government work peacefully with Russia, because it will serve as an example for other issues that are now beginning to rise in a neighborhood that—listen, Russia has got a lot of territory. It's a huge country, and it has got a lot of countries around her border. And when these issues get resolved peacefully, the world will see the fact that the Russian Government is interested in peace and that people are able to come to the table in a way that can deal with issues that have been in the making for a long period of time.

So we need to move the process forward. We can help facilitate dialog as best as we can, but this issue will be resolved by the President of Russia and the President of Georgia and the people in the territories.

Guantanamo Bay Detainees/Abu Ghraib

Q. Mr. President, you are a transformational, they call it, and promoting democracy in the world is a very ambitious goal and achieve peace, changing the world, and it's also acknowledging Europe. But such a

far-reaching idealism can also easily lead to moral inconsistencies that risk to undermine your credibility. For instance, how does the way detainees at Guantanamo Bay are being handled, how does that relate to your promotion of democracy and the rule of law?

The President. I appreciate that. That and, for example, the pictures people saw about the prison—prison abuse is different from the detainees in Guantanamo. We're working our way forward so that they—and our courts, by the way, are adjudicating this. It is a clear, transparent review of the decision I made by the courts, so everybody can see it. And they're being argued in the courts as we speak. People are being treated humanely. They were illegal noncombatants, however, and I made the decision they did not pertain to the Geneva Convention. They were not—these were terrorists.

Obviously, we've looked at Iraq differently. I can understand people being concerned about prison abuse when they see the pictures out of Abu Ghraib. And it made Americans universally sick, because the actions of those folks didn't represent the heart and soul of America, didn't represent the sentiments of the American people. And I am an idealistic person, because I believe in what is possible. I believe that freedom is universal, and I believe, if given a chance, people will seize the moment. But I'm also a realistic person, and I'm realistic enough to know that images on TV have sullied our country's image at times. And we've just got to continue to spread—tell people the truth, be open about the mistakes of Abu Ghraib, hold people to account.

Q. Would you say—can I follow up?

The President. Yes, sure.

Implications of President's Policy for Autocratic Regimes

Q. You say you are a realistic person, but there's also a problem with the limits. What are the limits of your idealistic policy? Does every autocratic regime, like Iran, just fear—just to have fear of the American military power?

The President. Oh, as I said, listen, I think issues ought to be solved diplomatically. My last choice is to commit military power. It's a very difficult, hard decision to put people

in harm's way. On the other hand, I do believe people ought to be free. I said in my speech—I'm going to say it again in Europe—that we ought to have a goal to end tyranny. Why should we be content when we know people are living in fear? We should have a goal to end the pandemic of AIDS as well. In other words, these are big goals. If you don't set big goals, you never achieve big things.

And I recognize it's—I didn't say, "End tyranny tomorrow"; I said, "End tyranny over time." And in my speeches that I talk about, I always say, "We need to work with friends to achieve—and I believe we can achieve those goals." But I'm also recognizing that—there's an issue, for example, in—the idealistic position was to work with the world, the United Nations, France, and the United States to get Syria out of Lebanon. But there's a consequence to that. There will be a vacuum. And now we've got to work, if we get Syria completely out—and I say "if" because we're able to measure troops; it's harder to measure intelligence services. But the statement is, "All out, not halfway out, not partially out, but all out"—and meaning it when you say it, by the way.

But there's a consequence to that, and that consequence is, is that there will be a period of time when the Government, a new Government, is going to have to try to figure out how to make sure there's minority rights. There's a lot of religious groups. And there the world needs to help this new democracy—I say "new democracy," a democracy without Syrian influence that basically determined the course of action—to help that Government go forward. That's another role we should play. But if you didn't have an idealistic streak in you, you wouldn't be saying, "It's possible to achieve democracy in Lebanon." Yet, I believe a democracy will be achieved in Lebanon, and I know it will serve as an important example in a neighborhood that is desperate for democracy.

I could keep rolling, because I believe that—I think you're seeing the beginning of great, historic change. And it's going to be bumpy. It's going to be rocky, and it's not going to be easy. I just told you, we have our own Government—here we are, the proponents of democracy, and we, ourselves,

were certainly not perfect for many years. And we've still got work to do here at home, don't get me wrong. But I feel passionately about the freedom movement because I truly believe that etched in everybody's soul is the desire to be free and that there is universality in freedom. And I reject the concept that certain people cannot self-govern or shouldn't be free because of the nature of their religion or the color of their skin.

Final question.

War on Terror/Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, how countries who are allies during the war, now they are partners and allies in the war against international terrorism. Are you satisfied with the level of coordination it—

The President. Satisfied—excuse me, satisfied with?

Q. With the level of coordination on anti-terrorist struggle, don't you think that the selling of Russian missiles to Syria and the Russians selling automatic Kalashnikovs to Venezuela could damage these relations?

The President. First of all, our relationship with Russia is broader than just cooperation on the war on terror. Listen, Russia—and the cooperation on the war on terror is good. And we were horrified with Beslan, and I know President Putin bore a heavy burden during that period of time. And we were horrified with the subway bombings and the movie theater tragedy. It just goes to show that terrorists can strike anywhere and are willing to do so. And I appreciate the cooperation we've had.

But we've got working groups on a lot of fronts, dealing with proliferation matters, energy matters, trade matters, dealing with WTO matters, dealing with institution-building matters. We've got a lot of relations, and that's good. In other words, it's not just a unilateral relationship.

We've made it clear that—and by the way, Vladimir Putin went to Israel and got to explain his decision on Syrian missiles, which I thought was very interesting. And we made our position very clear on the AK-47s to Venezuela, and that is, is that we're concerned that those weapons could end up in the hands of FARC, for example, a very destabilizing force in South America.

I do appreciate the cooperation—I was asked at a press conference by a member of our press corps about Iran, and I felt like the cooperation—the question, basically, seemed like to me to suggest that the Russians were at odds with what the United States, France, Germany, and Great Britain are doing. I don't view it that way. I view it quite in concert with, because Russia has made it clear that the Iranians should not be in a position to enrich uranium. And what they have suggested is that the Iranians take enriched uranium from Russia, use it in a civilian nuclear powerplant to develop power, and that Russia would then pick up the spent fuel rods. To me, that's very constructive, and I thought it was a constructive suggestion. It just goes to show that Russia is a player in the world scene and was willing to make a constructive suggestion on a very difficult issue that we're all working to try to achieve in a peaceful way, through diplomatic means.

Listen, thank you all for coming. I'm looking forward to the trip. I hope you got that sense, at least, from the conversation. I'm enthusiastic about traveling to countries. I look forward to, as best as a President is able to do, getting a sense of the people. And again, I look forward to meeting the leaders. I'm really looking forward to meeting—seeing Her Majesty as well. Thanks.

NOTE: The interview began at 10:23 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House and was embargoed by the Office of the Press Secretary until 10 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia; President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia; President Aleksandr Lukashenko of Belarus; Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski, former Prime Minister of Poland; President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia; movie producer Theo van Gogh, who was murdered in Amsterdam on November 2, 2004; Abu Faraj al-Libbi, senior Al Qaida associate arrested in Pakistan on April 30; and Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands. He also referred to FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Proclamation 7897—Mother's Day, 2005

May 5, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On Mother's Day, we pay tribute to the extraordinary women whose guidance and unconditional love shape our lives and our future. Motherhood often allows little time for rest. As President Theodore Roosevelt said of the American mother in 1905, "Upon her time and strength, demands are made not only every hour of the day but often every hour of the night." President Roosevelt's words ring as true today as they did 100 years ago.

The hard, perpetual work of motherhood shows us that a single soul can make a difference in a young person's future. As sources of hope, stability, and love, mothers teach young people to honor the values that sustain a free society. By raising children to be responsible citizens, mothers serve a cause larger than themselves and strengthen communities across our great Nation.

Mothers are tireless advocates for children. In our schools, mothers help to ensure that every child reaches his or her full potential. In our communities, they set an example by reaching out to those who are lost and offering love to those who hurt. A mother's caring presence helps children to resist peer pressure, focus on making the right choices, and realize their promise and potential.

In an hour of testing, one person can show the compassion and character of a whole country. In supporting their sons and daughters as they grow and learn, mothers bring care and hope into others' lives and make our Nation a more just, compassionate, and loving place.

The Congress, by a joint resolution approved May 8, 1914, as amended (38 Stat. 770), has designated the second Sunday in May each year as "Mother's Day" and has requested the President to call for its appropriate observance. It is my honor to do so.

May God bless mothers across our great land on this special day.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 8, 2005, as Mother's Day. I encourage all Americans to express their love, appreciation, and admiration to mothers for making a difference in the lives of their children, families, and communities. I also call upon citizens to observe this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., May 6, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 9.

Proclamation 7898—Jewish Heritage Week, 2005

May 5, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

During Jewish Heritage Week, we celebrate and honor Jewish Americans for their contributions to this country and for helping to shape our national character.

The story of the Jewish people reflects the triumph of faith, the importance of family, and the power of hope. Through inspiring stories of personal sacrifice and survival, the Jewish people have demonstrated unyielding trust in a loving God and enduring faith in human freedom.

America is stronger and more hopeful because of the industry, talent, and imagination of Jewish Americans from around the world. Their commitment to excellence in science, public service, law, athletics, literature, and countless other fields has enriched our Nation and enhanced our culture. Through strong ties to family and community, Jewish

Americans reflect a compassionate spirit and set a positive example for others.

We are also grateful for their legacy of selfless service to our country. As our troops defend liberty and justice abroad, we recognize Jewish Americans who have answered the call to help keep our Nation secure and build a more peaceful world. Their personal courage, love of country, and devotion to duty are helping to bring freedom and hope to millions who had previously lived under tyranny.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 8 through May 15, 2005, as Jewish Heritage Week.

I urge all Americans to celebrate the contributions of Jewish Americans to our Nation and observe this week with appropriate programs and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., May 9, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 10.

Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting the Export of Certain Goods to Syria

May 5, 2005

On May 11, 2004, pursuant to my authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701–1706) and the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 (Public Law 108–175), I issued Executive Order 13338 in which I declared a national emergency blocking the property of certain persons and prohibiting the exportation or re-exportation of certain goods to Syria. I took

this action to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States constituted by the actions of the Government of Syria in supporting terrorism, continuing its occupation of Lebanon, pursuing weapons of mass destruction and missile programs, and undermining United States and international efforts with respect to the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq.

Because the actions and policies of the Government of Syria continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States, the national emergency declared on May 11, 2004, and the measures adopted on that date to deal with that emergency, must continue in effect beyond May 11, 2005. Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency blocking the property of certain persons and prohibiting the exportation or reexportation of certain goods to Syria.

This notice shall be published in the *Federal Register* and transmitted to the Congress.

George W. Bush

The White House,
May 5, 2005.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register,
8:45 a.m., May 9, 2005]

NOTE: This notice will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 10.

**Letter to Congressional Leaders on
Continuation of the National
Emergency Blocking Property of
Certain Persons and Prohibiting the
Export of Certain Goods to Syria**
May 5, 2005

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in

the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice, stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13338 of May 11, 2004, blocking property of certain persons and prohibiting the exportation and reexportation of certain goods to Syria, is to continue in effect beyond May 11, 2005, to the *Federal Register* for publication.

The actions of the Government of Syria in supporting terrorism, pursuing weapons of mass destruction and missile programs, undermining United States and international efforts with respect to the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq, and with respect to Lebanon pose a continuing, unusual, and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue in effect the national emergency authorizing the blocking of property of certain persons and prohibiting the exportation and reexportation of certain goods to Syria, and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.

**Memorandum on Designation of
Officers of the Office of Personnel
Management To Act as Director of
the Office of Personnel Management**
May 5, 2005

*Memorandum for the Director of the Office
of Personnel Management*

Subject: Designation of Officers of the Office
of Personnel Management to Act as Director
of the Office of Personnel Management

By the authority vested in me as President under the Constitution and laws of the United States of America and pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998, 5 U.S.C. 3345 *et seq.*, I hereby order that:

Section 1. Order of Succession.

During any period when the Director of the Office of Personnel Management (Director), or the Deputy Director of the Office of Personnel Management, has died, resigned, or otherwise become unable to perform the functions and duties of the office of Director, the following officers of the Office of Personnel Management, in the order listed, shall perform the functions and duties of the office of Director, if they are eligible to act as Director under the provisions of the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998, until such time as at least one of the officers mentioned above is able to perform the functions and duties of the office of Director:

General Counsel;
 Chief of Staff;
 Director, Office of Communications and Public Liaison;
 Director, Office of Congressional Relations;
 Associate Director, Human Resources Products and Services;
 Associate Director for Management;
 Associate Director, Strategic Human Resources Policy;
 Chief Financial Officer;
 Associate Director, Human Capital Leadership and Merit Systems Accountability;
 Deputy Associate Director, Center for Investigations Services; and
 Director, Federal Executive Institute.

Sec. 2. Exceptions.

- (a) No individual who is serving in an office listed in section 1 in an acting capacity, by virtue of so serving, shall act as Director pursuant to this memorandum.
- (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of this memorandum, the President retains discretion, to the extent permitted by the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998, 5 U.S.C. 3345–3349d, to depart from this memorandum in designating an acting Director.

Sec. 3. Prior Memorandum Superseded.

This memorandum supercedes the Presidential Memorandum of March 11, 2003, entitled, “Designation of Officers of the Office of Personnel Management to Act as Director of the Office of Personnel Management.”

Sec. 4. Publication.

You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Budget Amendments

May 5, 2005

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed FY 2006 budget amendments for the Departments of Agriculture, Education, Health and Human Services, Justice, and the Treasury; and the United States-Canada Alaska Rail Commission. Overall, the discretionary budget authority proposed in my FY 2006 Budget would not be increased by these requests.

This transmittal also contains FY 2006 budget amendments and an FY 2005 proposal for the legislative branch. As a matter of comity, appropriations requests of the legislative branch are commonly transmitted without change.

The details of these proposals are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

Interview With Latvian Television

May 4, 2005

Latvia-U.S. Relations

Q. So there is no secret that you were a jet pilot, so how would you describe, in a couple of sentences, where is Latvia on your radar?

The President. That’s very interesting. Latvia is a close friend. Latvia is a country that has made a big difference in important alliances to the United States, like NATO. I remember when the moment came when the countries—the new countries admitted to NATO came into the room that I was sitting in, and I turned to the person I was sitting next to and said, “It’s going to be so

important for NATO to have these fresh—these new countries, because they bring a fresh outlook to freedom. These are people that have recently lived under, in this case, communism and realized what it means to be free, and it's going to be very important."

And so Latvia is very high on my radar screen. Plus, I'm very close to the President.

Q. How come you've become such good friends?

The President. Well, first of all, she's a straightforward person. I like straightforward people. You know, sometimes in politics you get people who say one thing and don't mean it. When she tells me something, she means it. She's very engaging and—very intelligent woman, and I admire her courage. And so I'm fond of her.

Russia-Baltic States Relations

Q. You're good friends with President Putin of Russia. Do you think you could encourage him to admit historical justice and admit the fact that Baltic States were occupied in 1940?

The President. Well, yes, I've talked to him about this issue when I was in Slovakia. I said, "Do you understand, friend, that you've got problems in the Baltics? You've got problems with Latvia because people don't like—the remembrances of the time of communism are unpleasant remembrances, and you need to work with these young democracies." I explained to him that it's best that there be democracies on his border, free countries, because free countries don't attack people; free countries listen to the hopes and aspirations of people. I don't know if I've made any progress with him or not, but I have made my position clear.

I understand there's a lot of people in the Baltics who are—you know, don't view the celebration in Russia as a day of liberation. Frankly, it's the beginning of a difficult period, and I can understand why some leaders of countries aren't going and some others are. That's a decision each leader must make, and I respect the decision of each leader.

But I'm going to continue to speak very forcefully on freedom and liberty, and the Baltics are a great example of free countries.

Q. But you are pretty certain that Russia is at least on the right path of development,

and it does not pose any threat to its smaller neighbors?

The President. Well, I certainly hope not. And one of the reasons a relationship with the United States and Latvia is important is, is that we will stand with Latvia if a larger country tries to intimidate the people. That's the great thing about Latvia joining NATO, is that the security is now guaranteed by not only the United States but all members of NATO.

Listen, the President and I speak about relations between Russia and Latvia quite frequently. And my job at times is to send a message that says, "Look, treat your neighbors with respect. Free nations, democracies on your border are good for you, whether that be, by the way, in the Baltics or in Ukraine." I've sent that same message—or Georgia. In other words, countries that are free countries are countries that will be good neighbors.

Belarus

Q. What can we do about Belarus, because a couple of hundred miles from where you're going to be visiting there sits the last dictator of Europe. What can we do about it?

The President. The "last dictator of Europe" is right, and we'll continue to pressure Belarus and call upon the world, the rest of the world, the free world—not the whole world but the free world—to work to give the people of Belarus a chance to live in a free society.

When I was in Slovakia I met with people of the freedom movement. I know when Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State, was in your part of the world, she met with leaders of the freedom movement too. And we'll continue to press forward. President Putin must understand that a free Belarus is in his country's interest.

Freedom and Democracy

Q. The sentiment of anti-Americanism, as I'm sure you know, is quite widespread in Europe and in my country as well. Do you think there is any degree of your own fault in the fact that this sentiment is on the rise or—

The President. I made some hard decisions. You know, going into Iraq was a hard

decision. I can understand people not liking that. But I would hope people in Europe would understand that freedom is not owned only by Europeans, that people around the world deserve to be free. And as we act in our self-interest to fight terrorists, as we work to make sure terrorists can't get weapons of mass destruction to cause great harm, that we will also work to free people. After all, the people of Latvia, of all people, ought to understand what it means to live under the subjugation of a doctrine that doesn't allow for freedom, communism.

And here people are living in the Middle East, for example, under the brutal reign of tyrants, huge mass graves, massive death, people tortured. And now they're living free. And when 8½ million people went to vote in Iraq, it sent a clear message that said, "We will not let the terrorists intimidate us; we want to be free, just like people in the Balkans used to speak, we want to be free."

You know, our country had a great history with the Baltics, that we said, "Your Embassies will remain little havens for freedom." We never recognized the lack of independence in the Baltics. We always believed that you should be free. And I hope over time, the young people of Latvia understand that that's what we stand for in America. We stand for freedom. We don't believe freedom is America's gift. We believe there's universal desire to be free. And the world will be more peaceful.

The hard decisions I've made I am confident will make this world a more peaceful place.

Q. Thanks very much, Mr. Bush.

The President. Welcome.

Q. I hope it's a good visit.

The President. I'm confident it will be. I'm looking forward to it.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:06 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast and was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 6. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia; President Valdimir Putin of Russia; and President Aleksandr Lukashenko of Belarus.

Interview With NTV of Russia

May 5, 2005

World War II

Q. Good morning, Mr. President, although it's good evening for Russian audience because of the time change. [Laughter] Your father is a World War II hero, the youngest Navy pilot. So how important the D-day is for you, personally, and for your family?

The President. Well, thank you for asking about my dad. He is—he was a—like many in America and in Russia that were called upon to defend the world against nazism. And fortunately, he came home.

And today, the celebration in Russia will remind us all about the sacrifices of, in my case, an individual I love, but also a generation, a generation of men and women who made extraordinary efforts, in Russia's case to defend the homeland, in America's case to work with allies to defeat Adolf Hitler as well as the Japanese.

And so it's a special day for me, personally, because it reminds me of the willingness of a young kid to go fight. But it also reminds me of the duty of my generation to work together to make the world a better place.

Eastern Europe After World War II

Q. The after-war Europe has been reshaped according to the Yalta Conference of 1943, by the decision of three very important personalities of this time, Mr. Roosevelt, Mr. Churchill, and Mr. Stalin. How fair is it to hold only Russia responsible for all the misfortunes of Eastern Europe and Baltic States over the last—[inaudible]?

The President. Now, that's a very fair question. Obviously, it was a decision made at the end of the war. I think that the main complaint would be that the form of government that the Baltics had to live under was not of their choosing. But no, there's no question three leaders made the decision.

Q. So not only Russia the bad guy of history?

The President. Well, I think everybody ought to bear the—as historians look back at Yalta—got to recognize that it was—you're rightly so in pointing it out—it was not only

the Russian leader but the British and American leader were at the table and agreed on the agreement.

Baltic States

Q. In Russia, we're very concerned on the rise of neo-nazism in Baltic States when Russian war veterans are humiliated publicly, when monuments to Russian soldiers are vandalized, and at the same time, where, on May 8th, there is a plan to open the monument to Nazi Brigade, that is well known only for fighting—not only for fighting against Russians but also for quite ugly things that were common for SS troops.

The President. Yes. Well, look, there is—I've got a message when I go to the Baltics, and that is it's important to respect democracy but, also, the respect of democracy is respect for minority rights. In other words, a true democracy is one that says minorities are important and that the will of the majority can't trample the minority.

And as to whether or not nations are honoring nazism, I mean, of course that should be rejected. Nazism was defeated. We're celebrating the defeat of nazism. We don't want to see nazism return. It's an extremist point of view that believes that you should be able to trample the rights of minorities. It was the Nazis who annihilated millions of Jews, for example, and there's a classic example of the rights of minorities being trampled. And we must never forget the lessons of why we fought together in World War II. And so I'm looking forward to delivering that message of tolerance.

Gasoline Prices

Q. There is a question that has nothing to do with your visit to Russia but is very important to our country as an oil-producing country. Once you mentioned that you'll be happy to find a magic wand and to cut the price on oil. So what oil price will be acceptable for the United States, and what do you think is the chance of finding this magic wand?

The President. Well, I appreciate—no, there is no magic wand. A soldier asked me, he said, "Why don't you lower gasoline prices," as if the government controlled price. And in our country, the Government

doesn't control price. And I told him, I said, "If I had a magic wand, I would wave it and lower your price." But I—that's not the way it works. This is a world based—the price based upon supply and demand. And demand has been going up relative to supply, which has been beneficial for oil-producing countries like Russia.

And I don't know what the right price is. Obviously, the lower the better for our economy, because every time the money—the dollars go up on the gasoline price, money leaves the pocketbooks of the working people. But that's the way the economy works. Hopefully, higher price will stimulate more production. More production will then help the price reach an equilibrium.

And the market is what it is. That's—the markets decide, not governments. I would hope that Russia would encourage a lot of investment, to open up the vast reserves she has. We need to do more exploration here. I spoke to the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia who assured me that he is trying to put more—to find more oil. And that's what high prices do. But people who have got oil have got to understand if the price gets too high, it could wreck economies, which will mean there's less purchasing power for the product.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, and welcome to Moscow.

The President. Looking forward to it. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 9:58 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast and was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 6. In his remarks, the President referred to Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

Interview With Rustavi 2 Television of Georgia

May 5, 2005

President's Upcoming Visit to Georgia

Q. Mr. President, let me thank you very much for this opportunity to interview you. And on behalf of Georgian people, let me welcome you to Georgia.

Why have you decided to visit Georgia? None of the American Presidents have visited this country before.

The President. You know, I got to know your President, and I can remember him urging me to come to Georgia. He's got such enthusiasm about life and about the future of Georgia. And I have been most impressed by the aftermath of the Rose Revolution, that I said, "I want to go. I want to see—I want to feel the sense of a new democracy. I want to be there to thank the Georgian people for setting such a good example for other countries that have followed." And so I'm really looking forward to the trip.

Georgian Economy/Georgia-Russia Relations

Q. Mr. President, Georgia faces a lot of problems, among them two unresolved conflicts, quite difficult economic situation, Russian military presence in the country. How do you see resolving all those problems?

The President. Peacefully. And I think they will be resolved peacefully. But you're right. It's difficult to go from a country of—a communist country to a free country. It's not easy. I think the President understands that and his Government understands that.

On the economic front, there's a lot of work to be done, but by routing out corruption and insisting upon rule of law and transparency, that will help to attract investment and capital.

Secondly, in terms of the regional disputes or the bases, I can help some. But the best way to do this—deal with this issue is to do it peacefully between Russia and Georgia. And I think we've got a very good chance of seeing these issues resolved in a peaceful way. It just takes time sometimes to deal with old disputes.

Russia and Democracies in Eastern Europe

Q. The latest developments of the Eastern European region, I mean, the Georgia's Rose Revolution and Orange Revolution—

The President. Yes.

Q. —in Ukraine and elections in Moldova and revolution in Kyrgyzstan, caused Russia's negative reaction. And relations between Moscow and these countries

are getting worse. So how is U.S. going to support these transitional democracies in the future?

The President. No, that's a great question, and the first thing is, is that when I see President Putin, I will remind him again that democracies on his border will make it easier for Russia to grow in a peaceful way. Democracies are peaceful. Democracies don't like war, and democracies are the best form of government to deal with animosities and concerns.

And so I will remind him that this is not a plot by anybody or any nation. This is just the inevitable course of humankind because all humans want to be free. And as Georgia's economy begins to grow and pick up, Russia will have a trading partner; Russia will realize that a prosperous democracy in her south is good for the people of Russia.

Cooperative Response to Pankisi Gorge Terrorists

Q. U.S. Department's annual report on terrorism raised some questions about the stability in Pankisi Gorge.

The President. Yes.

Q. But Georgian Government, with support of U.S., was successful in cleaning this gorge of military elements. So how will relations—I mean, military cooperation between Georgia and the United States in the future?

The President. Well, I appreciate that. No, it's going to be very close, obviously at the request of the Georgian Government. And I—the Georgian Government asked for help in routing out the terrorists who had lodged themselves in the Pankisi Gorge—training help. We were more than happy to provide it. But remember what was interesting about some of those operations: There was close cooperation with the Russians. And I thought that was very helpful and very instructive about what can happen, because it's in Russia's interest, it's in the United States' interest, and more importantly, it's in Georgia's interest to make sure the Pankisi Gorge is clear of terrorist traffic or terrorist safe haven. No country wants terrorists who are willing to cause harm living within their border. And so I found this to be a very instructive and interesting cooperative arrangement.

Georgia's Possible NATO Membership

Q. Georgia is seeking NATO membership.

The President. Yes.

Q. How big is chance?

The President. It's good. But remember, this is a performance-based criterion. In other words, there's a way to get into NATO. And I will tell President Saakashvili that there's—to look at the countries that have recently been admitted and see what decisions they made and how they—what they did. And I would hope it's good. But just remember, it's a process. It just doesn't happen overnight. And that's not only what I have told your President, but I've told the President of Ukraine and other countries that are interested in joining NATO.

Q. Thanks for your precious time, Mr. President.

The President. Glad you're here. Looking forward to going to Georgia. It's going to be an exciting trip.

Q. I wish you a successful and safest trip.

The President. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 10:07 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast and was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 6. In his remarks, the President referred to President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; and President Viktor Yushchenko of Ukraine.

**Digest of Other
White House Announcements**

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

April 30

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

May 2

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office,

he and Mrs. Bush met with 2005 Preserve America Presidential Award recipients.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Mrs. Bush participated in an interview with Al Roker of NBC television for later broadcast.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Abel Pacheco of Costa Rica, President Leonel Fernandez of the Dominican Republic, President Elias Antonio Saca of El Salvador, President Oscar Berger of Guatemala, President Ricardo Maduro of Honduras, and President Enrique Bolanos of Nicaragua to the White House for a meeting on May 12.

The President announced his intention to nominate R. Thomas Weimer to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior (Policy, Management, and Budget).

The President announced his intention to designate David A. Sampson as Acting Deputy Secretary of Commerce.

May 3

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Canton, MS, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Ruth Wilson.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of the Presidential delegation to the Czech Republic to attend the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Pilsen, on May 6: Jim Nicholson (head of delegation); William J. Cabaniss; Maj. Gen. Patrick Brady, USA (Ret.); Linda Maynor; and Julian Niemczyk.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert M. Kimmitt to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury.

May 4

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy to express his regret concerning the death of an Italian intelligence agent who was killed at a U.S. checkpoint in Iraq on March 4. He then had a telephone conversation with President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia to discuss his upcoming visit to Georgia and other issues.

Later in the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then met in the Oval Office with Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld.

May 5

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Hu Jintao of China to discuss the situation in North Korea, economic issues, China-Taiwan relations, and other issues. He then had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with Vice President Dick Cheney. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Nigerian President and Chairman of the African Union Olusegun Obasanjo.

May 6

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Bush departed for Riga, Latvia.

Later in the morning, while en route to Riga aboard Air Force One, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom to congratulate him on his May 5 reelection. He then had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush arrived at Riga, Latvia.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia to the White House on May 25.

The President announced his intention to nominate Edmund S. Hawley to be an Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security (Transportation Security Administration).

The President announced his intention to nominate Jill L. Sigal to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs).

The President announced his intention to nominate James M. Derham to be Ambassador to Guatemala.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert Johann Dieter to be Ambassador to Belize.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rodolphe M. Vallee to be Ambassador to the Slovak Republic.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

NOTE: No nominations were submitted to the Senate during the period covered by this issue.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released May 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary: Presidents From Central America and Dominican Republic To Visit Washington

Released May 3

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Trent Duffy

Statement by the Press Secretary on the appointment of Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Defense Policy and Strategy at the National Security Council

Released May 4

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley on the President's upcoming visit to Latvia, the Netherlands, Russia, and Georgia

Released May 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 19 and H.J. Res. 20

Released May 6

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of President Yudhoyono of Indonesia

**Acts Approved
by the President**

Approved May 5

H.J. Res. 19 / Public Law 109–11
Providing for the appointment of Shirley Ann
Jackson as a citizen regent of the Board of
Regents of the Smithsonian Institution

H.J. Res. 20 / Public Law 109–12
Providing for the appointment of Robert P.
Kogod as a citizen regent of the Board of
Regents of the Smithsonian Institution